SUMMER, 1960 VOLUME XXVII, NUMBER 3

CONTENTS

DOSTOEVSKY IN "CRIME AND PUNISHMENT," Philip Rahv 393

POEMS, Eugenio Montale, W. D. Snodgrass, I. A. Richards, Lenore Marshall, Daniel G. Hoffman, Sylvia Plath, William Meredith 426

THE FACT IN FICTION, Mary McCarthy 438

OUR FRIEND JUDITH, Doris Lessing 459

TOWARD A PORTRAIT OF THE FRENCH INTELLECTUAL, Victor Brombert 480

THE LIFE AND DEATH OF CARYL CHESSMAN, Elizabeth Hardwick 503

NOTES TOWARDS A UTOPIA, Francis Golffing 514

THE ACADEMIC COMEDY, Kingsley Widmer 526

THEATER CHRONICLE, Harold Clurman 536

SEX, SOCIOLOGY, AND CRITICISM, John Henry Raleigh 540

BOOKS

FICTION CHRONICLE, Frank Kermode 551

IN PRAISE OF FLORENCE, Nicola Chiaromonte 558

A SECOND NOVEL, Harvey Breit 561

END OF AN EPOCH, H. Stuart Hughes 564

VARIETY

AT SEA WITH THE BEATS, Victor Perera 569

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CONTRIBUTORS

NICOLA CHIAROMONTE, editor of **Tempo Presente,** published in Rome, is a frequent contributor to PR.

JOHN HENRY RALEIGH teaches English at the University of California.

FRANCIS GOLFFING teaches at Bennington and has written for numerous literary magazines.

KINGSLEY WIDMER's book, **The Perverse Art of D. H. Lawrence,** will be published next year.

DORIS LESSING, who lives in London, is the author of a number of novels and short stories printed in England.

W. D. SNODGRASS, author of **Heart's Needle,** is this year's winner of the Pulitzer Prize for poetry.

VICTOR PERERA, a young writer, studied at the University of Michigan.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The two poems by Salvatore Quasimodo, translated by Allen Mandelbaum, which appeared in the Spring issue, are included in **The Selected Writings of Salvatore Quasimodo,** published by Farrar, Straus & Cudahy.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Philip Rahv

DOSTOEVSKY IN "CRIME AND PUNISHMENT"

When thought is closed in caves
Then love shall show its roots in deepest hell
—William Blake

Is this the type of narrative nowadays called a psycho-thriller? Yes, in a sense it is, being above all, in its author's own words, the psychological account of a crime. The crime is murder. But in itself this is in no way exceptional, for the very same crime occurs in nearly all of Dostoevsky's novels. Proust once suggested grouping them together under a single comprehensive title: The Story of a Crime.

Where this novel differs, however, from the works following it is in the totality of its concentration on that obsessive theme. Virtually everything in the story turns on Raskolnikov's murder of the old pawnbroker and her sister Lizaveta, and it is this concentration which makes the novel so fine an example of artistic economy and structural cohesion. Free of distractions of theme and idea, and with no confusing excess or over-ingenuity in the manipulation of the plot, such as vitiates the design of *A Raw Youth* and reduces the impact of *The Idiot, Crime and Punishment* is the one novel of Dostoevsky's in which his powerful appeal to our intellectual interests is most directly and naturally linked to the action.

The superiority of this work in point of structure has been

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

repeatedly remarked upon, but what has not been sufficiently noted is its extraordinary narrative pace. Consider the movement of Part I, for instance. In this comparatively short section (coming to eighty-four pages in Constance Garnett's translation), we get to know the protagonist fairly well, to know the conditions of crushing poverty and isolation under which he lives and the complex origins of his "loathsome scheme"; we see him going through a rehearsal-visit to the victim's flat; we listen to Marmeladov's sermon in the pothouse, to the recital of his domestic woes, including the circumstances that forced his daughter Sonia to become a prostitute; we witness the drunken old man's homecoming and the hysterical violence with which he is received by his wife; then we read with Raskolnikov the long letter from his mother, learning a good deal about his family situation; we dream with him the frightful dream, looking at once to the past and to the future, of the beating to death of the little mare; finally, after several more scenes of the strictest dramatic relevance, we are brought to a close-up of the double murder, probably the most astonishing description of its kind in fiction, and watch the murderer returning to his lodgings where, after putting back the axe under the porter's bench, he climbs the stairs to sink on his bed in blank forgetfulness.

Thus in this first section of seven chapters a huge quantity of experience is qualitatively organized, with the requisite information concerning the hero's background driven into place through a consummate use of the novelistic device of foreshortening, and with the swift narrative tempo serving precisely as the prime means of controlling and rendering credible the wild queerness of what has been recounted. For this wild queerness cannot be made to yield to explanation or extrinsic analysis. To gain our consent—to enlist, that is, our poetic faith—the author must either dramatize or perish, and for full success he must proceed with the dramatic representation at a pace producing an effect of virtual instantaneousness. To have secured

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

this effect is a triumph of Dostoevsky's creative method—a triumph because the instantaneous is a quality of Being rather than of mind and not open to question. As the vain efforts of so many philosophers have demonstrated, Being is irreducible to the categories of explanation or interpretation.

The artistic economy, force and tempo of Part I is sustained throughout the novel. (The epilogue, in which hope and belief play havoc with the imaginative logic of the work, is something else again.) There is no wasted detail in it, none than can be shown to be functionally inoperative in advancing the action and our insight into its human agents. And it is important to observe that the attaining of this fullness and intensity of representation is conditional upon Dostoevsky's capacity to subdue the time element of the story to his creative purpose. Readers not deliberately attentive to the time-lapse of the action are surprised to learn that its entire span is only two weeks and that of Part I only three days. Actually, there is no real lapse of time in the story because we are virtually unaware of it apart from the tension of the rendered experience. Instead of time lapsing there is the concrete flow of duration contracting and expanding with the rhythm of the dramatic movement.

Least of all is it a chronological frame that time provides in this novel. As the Russian critic K. Mochulsky has so aptly remarked, its time is purely psychological, a function of human consciousness, in other words the very incarnation of Bergson's *durée réele*.[1] And it is only in Bergsonian terms that one can do it justice. Truly, Dostoevsky succeeds here in converting time into a kind of progress of Raskolnikov's mental state, which is not actually a state but a process of incessant change eating into the future and expanding with the duration it accumulates, like a snowball growing larger as it rolls upon itself, to use Bergson's original image.

This effect is partly accomplished by the exclusion from Raskolnikov's consciousness of everything not directly pertain-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing to his immediate situation. From beginning to end he is in a state of crisis from which there is no diversion or escape either in memory or fantasy. The import of what he thinks, feels, and remembers is strictly functional to the present. Thus he thinks of his mother, who is involved in the action, with distinct alternations of feelings, while his dead father hardly exists for him. He belongs to the past, and so far as Raskolnikov is concerned the past is empty of affect. The one time he evokes his father's figure is in the anguished dream of the beating to death of the little mare, and his appearance in that dream is singularly passive, manifestly carrying with it no charge of emotion. This dream, enacting a tragic catharsis, is introduced with calculated ambiguity. Is the dreamer actually remembering an episode of his childhood or is he imagining the memory? In any case, though the dream is of the past its meaning is all in the present. The pitiful little mare, whipped across the eyes and butchered by Mikolka and a crowd of rowdy peasants, stands for all such victims of life's insensate cruelty, in particular such victims as Sonia and Lizaveta whose appeal to Raskolnikov is that of "poor gentle things . . . whose eyes are soft and gentle." Also, the mare stands above all for Raskolnikov himself, and in embracing her bleeding head in a frenzy of compassion it is himself he is embracing, bewailing, consoling. He is present in the dream not only as the little boy witnessing an act of intolerable brutality but as at once its perpetrator and victim too. The dream's imagery is entirely prospective in that it points ahead, anticipating the murder Raskolnikov is plotting even while exposing it as an act of self-murder. Its latent thought-content is a warning that in killing the pawnbroker he would be killing himself too, and it is indeed in this light that he understands his deed afterwards when, in confessing to Sonia, he cries out: "Did I murder the old woman? I murdered myself, not her! I crushed myself once and for all, forever." The cathartic effect of the dream is such that upon awakening he recovers the sense of his human

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

reality, feeling "as though an abscess that had been forming in his heart had suddenly broken . . . he was free from that spell, that sorcery, that obsession." But the catharsis is momentary, and he no sooner hears that the pawnbroker will be alone in her flat the next evening than he is again gripped by his obsession.

Another instance of the functional character of Raskolnikov's memory is the way he recalls the invalid girl to whom he had once been engaged. "I really don't know," he says, "what drew me to her then . . . she was always ill. If she had been lame or hunchback, I believe I would have liked her even better." This is a meaningful admission, and it is curious that the numerous commentators on the novel should have unanimously ignored it. It is as if they all wanted to spare Sonia. For what prompts this memory if not his involvement with Sonia, who is in her own way ill too? In the eyes of the world and likewise of Raskolnikov in some of his moods she is a morally deformed creature, an outcast, and "a religious maniac" to boot. Physically too, the description of the invalid girl has much in common with that of Sonia.

Yet, for all his living in the present, Raskolnikov wills and acts with his whole past back of him; and it is for a very good reason that we are not permitted to gain a privileged understanding of his past in the sense of entering a series of his mental states anterior to the action. By denying us such intimacy the author effectively prevents us from rationalizing the mystery of the crime and its motive—the mystery which is never really solved but toward the solution of which everything in the novel converges. Now the study of Dostoevsky's manuscripts has shown that he was himself disturbed no end by the indefiniteness and uncertainty of Raskolnikov's motive, and he wrote a note reminding himself that he must once and for all clear up the uncertainty and isolate the "real" motive in order "to destroy," as he put it, "the indefiniteness and explain the murder this way or that way" (*tak ili etak*). Fortunately he was able to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

forget this injunction as the novel progressed. For his basic idea of his hero's motivation is such as to identify it with the totality of his consciousness, and to have changed that conception to a more conventional one would have led to the withering of that fine insight; and what that insight comes to, in the last analysis, is that human consciousness is inexhaustible and incalculable. It cannot be condensed into something so limited and specific as a motive. The consciousness is ever obliging in generating a sufficiency of reasons, but it is necessary to distinguish between reasons and motives. Not that motives have no existence; they exist, to be sure, but only on the empirical plane, materializing in the actual practice of living, primarily in the commitment of action. Existentially speaking, the acting man can be efficient and self-assured only insofar as his consciousness is non-reflective. Raskolnikov, however, is above all a man of reflection, and his crime is frequently described in the book as a "theoretical" one, "theoretical" not only in the sense of its being inspired by a theory but also in the sense that theory, that is to say abstraction, is of its very essence: no wonder he carries out the murder in the manner of a sleep-walker or of a man falling down a precipice. The textual evidence shows that what his crime mainly lacks is empirical content, and that is what some critics had in mind, I think, in defining it as a pure experiment in self-cognition. Thus it can be said of this murderer that he produces a corpse but no real motive. His consciousness, time and again recoiling upon itself in a sickening manner, consumes motives as fast as it produces them.

Crime and Punishment may be characterized as a psycho-thriller with prodigious complications. It is misleading, however, to speak of it as a detective story, as is so often done. It is nothing of the sort, since from the outset we know not only the murderer's identity but are also made to enter into some of his innermost secrets. True, the story is almost entirely given over to detection—not of the criminal, though, but of his motive. Inevitably it turns out that there is not one but a whole

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cluster of motives, a veritable *embarras de riches,* and if the criminal himself is in his own fashion constrained to take part in the work of detection it is because he is soon lost in the maze of his own motivation. Never quite certain as to what it was exactly that induced him to commit murder, he must continually spy on himself in a desperate effort to penetrate his own psychology and attain the self-knowledge he needs if he is to assume responsibility for his absurd and hideous act. And this idea of him as the criminal in search of his own motive is precisely what is so new and original in the figure of Raskolnikov.

His knowing and not knowing is in a sense the worst of his ordeal. He is aware of several motives that keep eluding him as his thought shifts among them, and there are times when they all seem equally unreal to him. To sustain himself in the terrible isolation of his guilt he must be in complete possession of a single incontrovertible motive representing his deepest self, his own rock-bottom truth. But he no sooner lays hold of this truth than he catches himself in a state of mind that belies it, as, for example, in the scene when right after burying the loot—a purse and some trinkets of jewelry—he suddenly stops in the street to confound himself with a simple and terrifying question: "If it had all really been done deliberately and not idiotically, if I really had a certain and definite object, how is it that I did not even glance into the purse and didn't know what I had there. Then why have I undergone these agonies and have deliberately undertaken this base, dirty and degrading business?" This is but one of several passages in which the abstraction, so to speak, of the crime, its lack of empirical substance, is brought home to us. There is an intrinsic incongruity between this criminal and his crime which is exhibited by the author with masterful indirection, and nowhere to better effect than when Raskolnikov makes his confession to Sonia. In the course of it, though straining as hard as he can to discover and at long last seize the motive that impelled him,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he still cannot stop wavering and giving various and contradictory explanations of his act. He begins by stating that he murdered "for plunder," but when Sonia cries: "You were hungry! It was to help your mother? Yes?" he at once retracts that explanation, muttering: "No, Sonia, no . . . . I was not so hungry . . . . I certainly did want to help my mother, but that's not the real thing either . . . ." A little later he adds that if he had simply killed the old pawnbroker because of hunger he would be *happy* now, exclaiming that he really wanted to become a Napoleon and that is why he killed her. Yet still later we hear him say that the argument from Napoleon is "all nonsense" as he reverts to the explanation from poverty and simple need. Soon enough, however, he strikes again the Napoleonic note, accounting for the murder now as a matter of wanting to have the daring: "I only wanted to have the daring . . . that was the whole cause of it"; he claims that he killed "not to gain wealth and power" but for himself alone so as to find out quickly whether "he was a louse like everybody else or a man," whether he was a "trembling creature" or one who has "the right" to step over barriers. Still another cause, more immediately psychological in bearing, is introduced when he speaks of his airless cupboard of a room, that room where he turned sulky and sat "like a spider," where he would not work but simply lay for hours thinking. It is chiefly this perpetual thinking, this desperate resort to sheer reflection, which is the source of the mystifications that torment him. Though it is his consciousness which did him in, it is to his empirical self that he absurdly looks for the justification it cannot supply; so that in the end, for all the keenness with which he explicates his act to Sonia, we are still left with a crime of indeterminate origin and meaning.

The indeterminacy is the point. Dostoevsky is the first novelist to have fully accepted and dramatized the principle of uncertainty or indeterminacy in the presentation of character. In terms of novelistic technique this principle manifests itself

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as a kind of hyperbolic suspense—suspense no longer generated merely by the traditional means and devices of fiction, though these are skilfully brought into play, but as it were by the very structure of human reality. To take this hyperbolic suspense as a literary invention pure and simple is to fail in comprehending it; it originates rather in Dostoevsky's acute awareness (self-awareness at bottom) of the problematical nature of the modern personality and of its tortuous efforts to stem the disintegration threatening it. Thus Raskolnikov, like Stavrogin and other protagonists of Dostoevsky's, is represented throughout under the aspect of modernity (the examining magistrate Porfiry Petrovitch sees him very specifically as "a modern case") understood as spiritual and mental self-division and self-contradiction. It is in this light that the search for the true cause of the crime becomes ultimately intelligible, the search that gives the novel at once its form and meaning, taking us where no psycho-thriller before or after *Crime and Punishment* has ever taken us, into a realm where only the sharpest psychological perception will see us through and into another realm still where our response to ideas is impetuously solicited: ideas bearing on crime and its relation to psychic illness on the one hand and to power and genius on the other; ideas about two kinds of human beings, ordinary and extraordinary, with the former serving as mere material for the latter who arrogate to themselves the right "to overstep the line" and remove moral obstacles at will; ideas concerning the supernal value of suffering and the promise of deliverance in Christ.

The principal characters (Raskolnikov, Svidrigailov and others) are the carriers of these ideas, and if we are not to sever the unity of thought and action, theory and practice, prevailing in the Dostoevskyean world, it is necessary to take their ideas for what they are, without reducing them, with the purely psychological critics, to a species of "interesting" rationalization, or, with the formalistic critics, to mere "fictive matter" drawn fortuitously from the intellectual sphere. That we must

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

first of all regard the ideas as dramatic motivation goes without saying; but that should not deter us from also accepting them as given on the level of thought. "I killed not an old woman but a principle," declares Raskolnikov. What is that principle and why does he want to kill it? The answer to such questions has been much simplified or, worse, still, credulously taken for granted.

From the Christian standpoint Raskolnikov is easily enough perceived to be a kind of Lazarus whom Sonia strives to raise from the dead. Yet if he comes forth from the tomb it is only after experiencing the ecstasy and terror of having touched for one moment the secret springs of freedom and power. "What, then, is to be done?" asks Sonia. This is indeed the fateful question which reverberates throughout the whole of Russian literature and to which all the leaders of Russian thought, from Chaadayev to Lenin, sought to provide an answer. Raskolnikov, too, accepts the challenge. "Break what must be broken," he replies, "once and for all, and take the suffering on oneself. . . . Freedom and power! Over all trembling creation and all the antheap! . . . That is the goal, remember that!" No wonder that though apparently renouncing that goal in yielding to Sonia's entreaties that he save himself through penance and submission, he nevertheless remains essentially unrepentant to the end. At the very least it can be said that he remains so deeply divided in his mind as to give himself up more because of confusion and despair than because of any real change of heart. About his regeneration we are told only in the epilogue, when at long last the pale sickly faces of the murderer and the saintly prostitute become "bright with the dawn of a new future." But this happy Siberian aftermath is the beginning of something altogether new and different. As the author observes in the last paragraph of the text, it "might be the subject of a new story but our present story is ended."* We, as

* It might indeed have been the subject of a new story. However, Dos-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

critical readers, cannot overmuch concern ourselves with such intimations of ultimate reconcilement and salvation. Our proper concern is with the present story, with the story as written.

Dostoevsky wrote the first of his four great novels in monthly installments for the *Russky Vestnik,* where it ran serially between January and December, 1866. He was following his usual course of producing a long work under the immediate pressure of editors and printers. In this instance, however, he appears to have encountered very few difficulties in meeting the magazine's schedule. And the ease with which he accomplished the actual composition may have been partly due at least to

toevsky, as a number of critics have noted, appears to have been incapable of carrying out his declared intention to depict the renewal of life on Christian foundations. On this score the late Leo Shestov made one of the most sardonic notations: "*Crime and Punishment* ends with the promise to picture the Christian rebirth of the hero. His words sound as if he were binding himself with a sacred vow. And, in point of fact, as a professed teacher of humanity, was not Dostoevsky in duty bound to let us in on the secret of the new reality and fresh possibilities that opened up to Raskolnikov? Yet our preceptor never managed to fulfill that sacred vow. The same promise is encountered again in his foreword to *The Brothers Karamazov,* where we are told that in order to portray his real hero, Alyosha, he would need to write still another volume, as if the existing book with its thousand pages lacked sufficient space to accommodate the "new life." In the three novels he produced after *Crime and Punishment* there is no mention of the sacred vow. Prince Myshkin cannot be taken into account here. If he is the one representing the "renewal" awaiting mankind . . . then there is no point whatever in looking toward the future. . . . No, compared to Dostoevsky's other heroes Prince Myshkin is a misfit. This novelist understood only restless, fractious, struggling people whose search is never ended. No sooner did he undertake to show us a man who has found himself and achieved tranquility than he fell into fatal banalities. One thinks, for instance, of the elder Zosima's dreams of "the coming wonderful union of men." What is this "wonderful union" if not another of those idyllic pictures of the future which even the socialists—so maliciously ridiculed in his cellar by the narrator of *Notes from Underground*—have by now learned to do without?"[2]

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the fact that the narrative mode he had adopted after considerable experimenting and much vacillation, the mode, that is, of telling the story from the standpoint of the "omniscient author," justified itself in practice, allowing him to make the most of his material without strain or hindrance.

The strain had indeed told on him in the late months of 1865, when while living in Wiesbaden he had written an incomplete draft of the novel in the form both of a diary and of a murderer's confession. Those versions turned out to be so unsatisfactory, chiefly because of the cramping effects of the method of narration in the first person, that he was forced to scrap them. The economy of interest he had been trying to enforce by means of that method proved to be too much of a good thing, and he now took exactly the opposite tack, expanding the interest where formerly he had compressed it. Into the new expansive scheme he introduced the figures of Svidrigailov and Porfiry Petrovitch, who have nothing in common besides the fact that both represent possible attitudes toward Raskolnikov, viewpoints or perspectives enabling us to see at once more clearly and more variously the significance of his case. Dostoevsky also introduced into his revised scheme the basic elements of a tale, entitled *The Drunkards,* which he had just sketched out in outline and in which he was proposing to enter into "all the ramifications" of the then rather topical subject of alcoholism rampant among the city poor, with the emphasis falling on "the picture of a family and the bringing up of children under such circumstances." It is in this somewhat fortuitous manner, or so it would seem on the face of it, that the Marmeladov sequence, so reminiscent of the author's earlier vein in its pathos of indigence and harrowing exposition of the Petersburg misery, as the Russians are wont to call it, came to be included in the account of Raskolnikov's crime.

But the fortuitousness is more apparent than real. There is an inner logic, both of content and structure, in his combination of subject matter from which the novel gains enormously—and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

this can be said even while conceding that the rather stagey woes of the Marmeladovs are inducive of some moments of weariness. A somewhat Dickensian family with deviations toward Russian intensity, they are of course the very embodiment of the Petersburg misery. But Raskolnikov is also a child of that misery, patently belonging to the world of the insulted and injured, though in him the humility and submissiveness of that world's human mixture are turned inside out. He is the first of its inhabitants to attempt its redemption by making a bid, in however futile and hideous a fashion, for freedom and power.

Intrinsically his figure is a composite of the typical protagonists of Dostoevsky's earlier and later fiction. Morbidly estranged as he is from life and ceaselessly brooding in his cupboard of a room, he at once brings to mind certain traits of the underground man as well as of the daydreaming recluse portrayed in such stories of the 1840's as "The Landlady" and "White Nights"—the recluse who, suffering from nearly pathological depression and nameless guilt-feelings, keeps to himself and lives a life of wishful fantasy. At the same time Raskolnikov represents a startling departure from the recluse type in that, having overcome the latter's masochistic need for self-abasement, his aggression is no longer turned inward but outward. He is quite as much a fantast as the daydreaming recluse, but his fantasy has left behind it all *Schwärmerei* and noble aspiration a la Schiller: it has taken on the color of blood. A complete egoist on one side of his nature at least and a surprisingly candid one at that, he is filled with the wrath of outraged pride and a furious impatience to break out from his trapped existence even at the risk of self-destruction. Moreover, to see him from this angle of vision, as the Dostoevskyean hero in process of evolution, is to note another new element in him, namely, that he is an intellectual *pur sang,* recklessly yielding himself to the passion of thought and caught at last in the toils of an idea, mastered by it to the point of monomania. Thus the novel of which he is the protagonist has a double aspect. In virtue

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of its carryover of the theme of the Petersburg misery it brings to a close the series of so-called social narratives which, from *Poor Folk* to *The Insulted and Injured,* is dominated by a consistent motif that has been aptly defined as that of "the impotent protest of powerless people." In its second aspect, however, the novel throws off the limitations of the earlier theme, attaining the higher goals of its author's greater or ultimate period.

Raskolnikov's involvement with the Marmeladov clan enabled Dostoevsky to solve what must have been his main compositional problem: How to portray with entire cogency a hero who is a solitary and monomaniac acting throughout in a mood of "morbid irritability" verging on madness without succumbing to him, that is to say, without letting him take the lead to the degree of making the world over in his image? This is but another way of formulating one of the principal difficulties which forced Dostoevsky to abandon the first versions of the book. For to have permitted Raskolnikov, as first-person narrator, to absorb the story unto himself would surely have resulted in its impoverishment, producing an impression of life closing in, a claustrophobic effect diminishing the hero's stature in our eyes and turning him into an altogether special case.* And this is where the Marmeladovs come in exactly, that for all the grimness of their situation and its grotesque features they still somehow exist within the bounds of the normal, whereas Raskolnikov is decidedly outside it; hence their presence adds considerably to the story's quota of circumstantial realism, helping to overcome the hazard implicit in Raskolnikov's malaise. For we must keep in mind that his story, which on one

* The special or clinical case is precisely what no master of the narrative medium will let himself in for. Dostoevsky did let himself in for it once, in the early nouvelle, *The Double,* which, for all its startling effects, cannot be rated otherwise than as a failure. He never repeated that youthful error. In lesser talents, however, this error becomes habitual, for in coping with the extremes of morbidity or irrationality they are frequently lured into betraying the shared sense of human reality.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

side is an account of a crime open to explanation on the seemingly objective grounds of material need and a sinister "nihilistic" theory, is converted on the subjective side into an analysis of an extreme pathological condition or soul-sickness, if you will.

The episodes dealing with Svidrigailov, the would-be seducer of Raskolnikov's sister Dounia, have an engrossing interest of their own, but they also serve the same functional purpose of reducing the protagonist's remoteness from the common human measure. In order to heighten the dramatic tension and explore to the end the complex meanings of Raskolnikov's plight, it was positively necessary to involve him in intimate human associations, notwithstanding the feeling of absolute aloneness, or "agonizing, everlasting solitude," into which he is plunged by his murderous act. It is a feeling brought on by the guilt he refuses to acknowledge and strains every nerve to repress; and what better way was there of dramatizing the struggle within him between guilt and scornful pride than by showing him entering almost in spite of himself into relations with people who for reasons both good and bad are intent on penetrating his isolation? Sonia, his "chosen bride" and Christian mentor, is of course the chief agent of this turn of the plot, but so in his own paradoxical fashion is Svidrigailov. The latter, however, is so fascinating a character in his own right, exercising an appeal nearly matching that of the hero, that at times he threatens to run away with the story; certainly the scene of his suicide and of the dream-haunted night that precedes it are perfectly realized incidents and among the marvels of the book. It must have called for the nicest management on the author's part to hold him to his subordinate position. But that was only part of the task Dostoevsky set himself in undertaking to unify the three thematic elements at his disposal: the major theme of Raskolnikov's crime and its consequences and the strongly contrasted minor themes of the lowly and good Marmeladovs on the one hand and of the wealthy immoralist Svidrigailov on the other. And it is the achieved

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

integration with its fine contrapuntal effects which makes for verisimilitude of a higher order, for novelistic truth and density, and for structural cohesion.

But though the Svidrigailov sequence is successfully integrated into the main action, there is no denying that he is invested with an originality and expressive power that invite comment. It will not do to see him, in the fashion of most critics of Dostoevsky, as being merely Raskolnikov's double, representing the pole of self-will in his character. The formal abstractness of this traditional approach to Svidrigailov cannot do him justice; and so far as the element of self-will is concerned, Raskolnikov, like all "the children of darkness" in Dostoevsky, has more than enough of it in himself and is in no need of Svidrigailov's services. No, the latter has an independent existence in the novel though his position in it is structurally subordinate; his function is not simply that of ministering to its hero. There is no innate relationship between the two, no affinity of the mystical order such as is posited in so many Dostoevsky studies. Actually Svidrigailov enters the novel by way of the external plot or intrigue (his pursuit of Dounia), yet once he is in it he provides the story not only with an additional perspective on Raskolnikov but also with the psychosexual vitality which it otherwise lacks, for both Raskolnikov and Sonia are singularly sexless. Svidrigailov exemplifies a distinct character-type in Dostoevsky, the type of the nihilist in the realm of sensuality. He is a more elaborate and refined version of the rather coarse-grained libertine Valkovsky in *The Insulted and Injured* and he anticipates the figures of Stavrogin and the elder Karamazov in the later novels (like Stavrogin he is guilty of outraging a little girl). In this character-type, sensuality becomes a flight from the vertiginous consciousness of freedom and from a kind of ennui which has gone beyond the psychological and has acquired a metaphysical status. Thus Svidrigailov believes in ghosts who "are as it were shreds and fragments of other worlds" and who appear only to people

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

whose psyche is prepared to receive them. He rejects all dogma, including that of the atheists, as he is given to relativizing all possible ideas, whether of belief or unbelief. Whereas Raskolnikov does not believe in a future life, Svidrigailov speculates that perhaps the future life does exist but that there are only "spiders there or something of that sort." "We always imagine eternity as something beyond our conception, something vast, vast! But why must it be vast? Instead of all that, what if it is one little room, like a bathhouse in the country, black and grimy and spiders in every corner, and that's all eternity is?" As for vice, he chides Raskolnikov for his moral prejudices, contending that in sexual vice "there is at least something permanent, founded indeed upon nature and not dependent on fantasy, something present in the blood like an ever-burning ember, forever setting one on fire and maybe not to be quickly extinguished even with years. You agree that it's an occupation of a sort." Admitting that it is a disease, like everything that exceeds moderation, he defends his indulgence in it by claiming that to give it up would mean that he would be forced to shoot himself. Clearly, his métier is not the simple-minded villainy of melodrama but a species of objective cruelty (as in his doing away with his wife and driving his footman to suicide) which is in a sense a form of meditation upon life beyond good and evil translated into practice. Therefore he is at the same time capable of acts of sympathy and kindness, as when he helps the Marmeladov orphans and lets Dounia go after cornering her. Good and evil are never ends to him but simply the available, even if sometimes redundant, means of convincing himself that it is possible to continue living. Hence the actions he performs strike one as transpiring somewhere outside himself, for they are at bottom experiments conducted by a self which is itself an experimental projection.

It has been observed often enough that every literary artist genuinely an innovator creates his own audience. This is

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

certainly true of Dostoevsky, in whose sphere we have now learned to move without undue strain but who shocked his contemporaries by his open and bold reliance on melodrama and by the seeming fantasticality of his characters. The Russian reader had learned by that time to identify the hurried, equable, lifelike realism of writers like Turgenev, Goncharov and Tolstoy with the higher norms of the novel; and what those writers scrupulously avoided above all was the sensational and excessive. Dostoevsky was hard put to it to persuade the reader that he too, despite his startling deviations from the newly-established norms, was a realist. Hence while writing *Crime and Punishment* he fretted over the thought that his story would gain no credence from the public; and since he had long been trying to defend himself against the charge of insufficient regard for the real, he was pleased to note, shortly after the appearance of the first installment of the novel, that a crime curiously similar to the one he was describing had been committed by a Moscow student and reported in the newspapers. He at once seized upon this item as confirming his own "special view" of the relation between art and actuality. "What the majority call fantastic and exceptional," he wrote to the critic Strakhov, "sometimes signifies to me the very essence of reality. . . . In every issue of the newspapers you come upon accounts of the most real facts and amazing coincidences. For our writers, who are unconcerned with them, they are fantastic. But being facts they are reality none the less."

But this appeal to actual life—formless, disorderly and inconsequent life with its "most real facts and amazing coincidences"—is unworthy of the genius of Dostoevsky. In spite of his opposition to such radical-minded simplifiers of the relation of art and life as Chernishevsky, Dobroliubov and Pisarev, critics exceedingly influential in their time, he was himself far from immune to the idea then prevailing in his intellectual milieu that the work of art was useless and perhaps even immoral in its inutility unless directly validated by life or "reality,"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

understood in the simplest empirical sense of these terms. Dostoevsky was after all a Russian writer of his generation, a generation ideologically inspired to exalt life over art and seeking to justify the latter by citing the gifts of illumination and hopes of betterment it ostensibly brings to life. Where Dostoevsky twisted that common assumption to suit his creative practice was by claiming to discern the essence of reality not in its typical everyday manifestations but in the exceptional and fantastic. He was unable to go beyond that formula toward the assertion of a symbolic rather than literal correspondence between life and the fictive worlds of his own devising. Hence the speciousness of his argument from life in his literary apologetics, as in his pointing to life's "amazing coincidences" in the letter to Strakhov quoted above. The fact is that no coincidence copied from life can make in the least plausible the kind of coincidences, even the minor ones, you find in *Crime and Punishment,* such as the prosperous and respectable bourgeois Luzhin turning up in the same slum-lodging with the starving Marmeladov family or Svidrigailov, a rich man, finding no better place to stay in Petersburg than in the very same house where Sonia lives, a house in which his flat adjoins the room where she practices her trade and conducts those incredible conversations with Raskolnikov upon which he eavesdrops with the greatest relish. It is plain that Svidrigailov is situated where he is in order to make it possible for him to learn Raskolnikov's secret at the same time as he confides it to Sonia; an important turn of the plot depends on it. This is a calculated coincidence different in kind from those, however improbable, that life offers. It belongs to the stock-in-trade of melodrama, and Dostoevsky learned the use of it in his assiduous reading of Hoffman, Dickens, Balzac, Sue, and a host of lesser authors of crime-thrillers and adventure stories.

It is in literature rather than in unprocessed life that you find some of the sources of this novel, including its major plot-element of a murder committed by someone who stands in no

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

personal relation to the victim. Also, the Napoleon motif, on which so many changes are rung by Dostoevsky, is clearly transposed by him to a Petersburg setting from mid-nineteenth-century French fiction, Balzac and Stendhal in particular, both of whom glorified Napoleon (the former covertly and the latter overtly) and justified their ambitious plebeian heroes by appealing to his illustrious example. Thus Raskolnikov may be seen as a Russian version of Julien Sorel and Eugène de Rastignac—the young man on the make who comes to the capital from the provinces intent on a career and a conquest. It is especially Balzac's *Le Père Goriot* that suggests an influence in the design of Raskolnikov's story. In his essay on Dostoevsky[3] Georg Lukacs mentions the anecdote of the Chinese Mandarin in Balzac's novel as containing the hint that the Russian writer might have developed. The revelant passage is worth citing in full. It occurs in a dialogue between Rastignac and his friend the medical student Bianchon:

"What makes you look so serious?" asked the medical student, taking his arm [Rastignac's] to walk up and down in front of the palace with him.

"I am bothered by troublesome thoughts."

"Of what kind are they? You know that thoughts can be cured."

"How?"

"By yielding to them."

"You are laughing at me, without knowing what I mean. Have you read Rousseau?"

"Do you remember the place where he asks the reader what he would do, if he could become rich by killing an old mandarin in China, by the sole act of his will, without stirring from Paris?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"Pooh! I have already come to my thirty-third mandarin."

"Don't joke. Come, suppose you knew it were possible, and that a nod from you would do it, should you consent?"

"Is he a very old mandarin? But young or old, sick or well, my goodness—the deuce. No, I shouldn't."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

And Bianchon concludes his argument in favor of sparing the Chinaman by warning Rastignac against a rash solution of the problem posed at "the entrance of life," against the attempt to cut that Gordian knot with his sword. "If you mean to act thus," he says, "you must be an Alexander or else you will be sent to the gallows." Unlike Rastignac, however, Dostoevsky's hero confides in no one and sets out to cut the Gordian knot without in the least resembling an Alexander or a Napoleon, though hoping that his crime might possibly prove him to belong to their superior breed.

It seems to me, too, that Dostoevsky drew on *Le Père Goriot* for far more than the germinal anecdote of the Chinese Mandarin. Svidrigailov's posture vis-à-vis Raskolnikov is in certain respects strongly reminiscent of Vautrin's relation to Rastignac in Balzac's novel. We know that Svidrigailov is missing from the early drafts of *Crime and Punishment,* and it is not improbable that when it came to composing the final version Dostoevsky decided to introduce a character playing Vautrin to his own Rastignac. Consider that both Vautrin and Svidrigailov are older men who assume the role of mentors in the ways of the world, that both have insinuating manners and appear cheerful and obliging when it suits them, that both are sexual deviants (the Frenchman is a homosexual and the Russian has very special tastes in underage girls), and that both are predatory types who make no secret of their immorality. Moreover, some of the ideas that Vautrin communicates to Rastignac turn up in Raskolnikov's thought virtually without modification, as if he had absorbed the lesson addressed to his French prototype. Vautrin declares, for instance, that there are but two courses open to a man, blind obedience or open revolt, and that he can make his way in the world either "by the splendor of genius or the adroitness of corruption. He must burst like a cannon-ball into the ranks of his fellow-men, or he must move among them like the pestilence. Honesty is of no use. Men yield to the power of genius; they hate and calum-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

niate it . . . but they yield to it if it persists, and kneel to it when they find that they cannot suppress it." There is a remarkable parallel between this formulation and Raskolnikov's view, passionately expounded to Sonia, that "whoever is strong in mind and spirit will have power over men. Anyone who is greatly daring is right in their eyes. . . . I divined that power is only vouchsafed to the man who dares to stoop and pick it up. There is only one thing, one thing needful: one has only to dare." Clearly, Vautrin's genius who bursts like a cannon-ball among his fellow-men bears an uncommon resemblance to Raskolnikov's criminal of genius who dares assert the right inherent in his superiority and whose criminality is soon forgiven or forgotten as he becomes a lawgiver and leader among men. However, in constructing Raskolnikov's theory of the relation between power and genius, Dostoevsky borrowed from more than one source; Balzac is but one of them.

It is possible to speak if not of a school then surely of a Petersburgian genre in Russian literature, of which Dostoevsky is in fact the leading practitioner. Pushkin's "The Bronze Horseman" is doubtless the outstanding poem of that genre, as Gogol's "The Overcoat" is the outstanding story and *Crime and Punishment* the outstanding novel. One must be aware of its author's profound response to Petersburg and of the masterly way in which he appropriated it to imaginative purposes in order to perceive that as the scene of Raskolnikov's crime the city is one of the essential constituents of the story, more foreground than background, a unique urban setting charged with multiple meanings, of which one of the more urgent emerges from Dostoevsky's preoccupation with the Petersburg misery and his depiction of it in a manner demonstrating his solidarity with its victims. As a novelist of the modern metropolis he was of course in the line of Balzac and Dickens, by whom he was greatly influenced, though there is a marked difference in his representation of the city and theirs.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Balzac's Paris, as Arnold Hauser has remarked, is still a romantic wilderness, "a theatrical setting painted in chiaroscuro contrasts, a fairyland in which dazzling riches and picturesque poverty live side by side,"[4] whereas Dostoevsky describes the metropolis in somber colors, taking us into its reeking taverns and coffin-like rooms, bringing to the fore its petty-bourgeois and proletarian types, its small shopkeepers and clerks, students, prostitutes, beggars and derelicts. True as this is, there is also something else in Dostoevsky's vision of Petersburg, a sense not so much of romance as of poetic strangeness, a poetic emotion attached to objects in themselves desolate, a kind of exaltation in the very lostness, loneliness and drabness which the big city imposes on its inhabitants, as is so poignantly brought out in the scene when in an evening hour Raskolnikov stops on a street corner to listen to a sentimental song ground out on a barrel-organ and sung by a girl in a cracked and coarsened voice.

"Do you like street music?" said Raskolnikov, addressing a middle-aged man standing idly by him. The man looked at him, startled and wondering.

"I love to hear singing to a street organ," said Raskolnikov, and his manner seemed strangely out of keeping with the subject. "I like it on cold, dark, damp evenings—they must be damp—when all the passers-by have pale green, sickly faces, or better still when the wet snow is falling straight down, where there's no wind—you know what I mean? and the street lamps shine through it. . . ."

"I don't know. . . . Excuse me. . . ." muttered the stranger, frightened by the question and Raskolnikov's strange manner. . . .

Catching Raskolnikov talking to himself on the street, Svidrigailov says to him: "This is a town of crazy people. . . . There are few places where there are so many gloomy, queer influences on the soul of man as in Petersburg." There is indeed something peculiarly Petersburgian about Raskolnikov, and not merely in the sense that he belongs to its "proletariat

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of undergraduates." The crime he commits—in the idea of it, namely, which is so strange an amalgam of the abstract and artificial with the sheerly fantastic—corresponds intrinsically to the character of this city, frequently described in exactly such terms.* It is in the heat and stench of its slums, as he wanders endlessly through the streets, that Raskolnikov spawns his idea, which he himself likens to "a spell, a sorcery, an obsession." And afterwards, having carried his idea to its terrible conclusion, though not at all in the bravura manner of a Napoleon but rather like a man deprived of reason and will power by mental illness, on the very next day he resumes his wanderings about the city in a state more often than not bordering on delirium.

St. Petersburg was far more the capital of the Russian empire than of the Russian land. It was erected on the Finnish marshland with cruel haste and at the cost of many lives by

* The ambiguity of Petersburg in its odd blending of the real and the unreal is what Dostoevsky tried mainly to capture. In *A Raw Youth* there is an especially suggestive passage in which young Arkady speaks of a Petersburg morning as being at the same time infinitely prosaic and infinitely fantastic.—"On such a wild Petersburg morning, foul, damp and foggy, the wild dream of some Hermann out of Pushkin's "Queen of Spades" (a colossal figure, an extraordinary and regular Petersburg type . . . the type of the Petersburg period) might, I believe, strike one as a piece of solid reality. A hundred times over, in such a fog, I have been haunted by a strange and persistent fancy: 'What if this fog should part and float away? Would not all this rotten and slimy town go with it, rise up with the fog, and vanish like smoke, and the old Finnish marsh be left as before and in the midst of it, perhaps, to complete the picture, a bronze horseman on a panting, overdriven steed?' "

The bronze horseman is Falconet's statue of Peter the Great, but implicitly the reference is of course to Pushkin's famous poem of that title. Hermann is the protagonist of Pushkin's story "The Queen of Spades," in whom some scholars have discerned an early model of Raskolnikov. For like Dostoevsky's hero, Hermann is under the spell of Napoleon and he too, daring all on one throw, kills an old woman in an attempt to wrest from her the secret that will make his fortune. What the two characters share, basically, is the Petersburgian power-urge combined with the peculiar Petersburgian dreaminess.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the edict of Peter the Great, who undertook, with the savage rationality typical of belated and alien converts to progress, to transform his backward domain all at once into an efficient state militarized along modern lines. The self-will and precipitate style of this operation brought into being a city without roots in the past or in the vast rural hinterland, the center of alienation and of everything novel and foreign violating the national traditions and the patriarchal mode of life. It was in Petersburg that in a fashion peculiar to it the imperial bureaucracy exerted itself to westernize the country from above while the turbulent and seditious "proletariat of undergraduates," impelled by other motives and a nobler vision, strove to effect the same end from below. Thus the material brutality of the caste pressing down upon society from the top met its counterpart in the tragic spiritual brutality of the dissident intelligentsia forcing the issue lower down.

No wonder the Slavophils hated Petersburg. Khomaikov, a leading ideologue of their faction, spoke of it as a city of dead beauty, where "all is stone, not only the houses but the trees and inhabitants as well." The Marquis de Custine, visiting the capital in 1839, could not believe that it would endure. "I have seen no place that is more penetrated with the instability of human beings," he wrote. Penetrated with the instability of human beings—a marvelously apt phrase which we can apply to the Dostoevskyean world as a whole with but a slight shift of context. You will find this singular instability in Raskolnikov, to be sure, but you will also find in him more than a trace of that savage rationality characterizing the champions of the Petersburg period in Russian history and subsequently the revolutionary elite. He emerges from that "literate world of reckless youth," as Bakunin called it, in which the latter professed to see the hope of the revolution, and he is the epitome of those traits of which Alexander Herzen gave an account of incomparable precision in his *Memoirs*. "We are greatly given," he noted, "to theoretical pedantry and argumentativeness. This

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

German propensity is in us associated with a special national element—which we might call the Araktcheyev* element—a ruthlessness, a passionate rigidity, and an eagerness to dispatch their victims. To satisfy his grenadier ideal, Araktcheyev flogged living peasants to death; we flog to death ideas, arts, humanity, past leaders, anything you like. In dauntless array we advance step by step to the limit and overshoot it, never sinning against logic but only against *truth;* unaware, we go on further and further, forgetting that real sense and real understanding of life are shown precisely in stepping short before the extreme. . . ."

In truth Raskolnikov is one of those young men whose coming was foreshadowed with fear by Joseph de Maistre, the author of *Soirées de St. Pétersbourg,* when he observed, in discussing the peasant uprisings of the eighteenth century, headed by such leaders as Emelian Pugachev, an obscure and illiterate Cossack, that if another such revolt ever took place in Russia it would be headed by a Pugachev "armed with a university degree." But the hour of the university Pugachevs had not quite struck when Raskolnikov set out entirely on his own, cut off from any social effort or collective historical action, to remove "certain obstacles." Proclaiming the necessity of breaking once and for all what must be broken, in other words, of killing not simply an old woman but the principle of authority bolstered by the moral law, he yet proceeds to commit not an act of political terror but another crime altogether that inevitably stamps him as no more than a common criminal, a criminal from egoism. He is a dissenter and rebel (*raskol,* the word from which his name derives, means schism or dissent), in essence the type of revolutionary terrorist of that period, whose act of terror is somehow displaced unto a private object. The ter-

*Alexis Araktcheyev (1769-1834), a high official and trusted adviser of Alexander I in the closing years of his reign, put into effect such inordinately cruel administrative practices as to give rise to the dread term *Araktcheyevchina.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rorist is a political criminal, and if he is to be vindicated at all it is by an appeal to historical necessity; no such appeal is open to Raskolnikov.

Of course he has at his disposal a theory justifying his crime, and I have already indicated one source of it in Balzac. Another and more important source, to my mind, is Hegel's concept of the historic hero (the agent of the World-Spirit) and his victims. The enormous influence of the Hegelian philosophy in Russia during the late 1830's and the 1840's is well known; the period of this influence coincides with Dostoevsky's youth and it would have been impossible for him to escape it. But that he was in fact concerned with it is shown, moreover, by his letter (of February 22, 1854) from Siberia to his brother Mikhail asking that he send him, among other books, Hegel's *Philosophy of History.** It is strange that this source, far from esoteric, should have been overlooked. I imagine that scholars and critics have been so carried away by the apparent analogy between Raskolnikov (in his theory of himself, that is) and Nietzsche's Superman as to have missed a more substantial likeness, though one which is more in the nature of a caricature than an exact replica. It is only in the vulgarized popular version of the Superman that Raskolnikov's theory reminds us of him; so far as Nietzsche's actual idea of the Superman goes, as a product of a mutation of the human species, there is no resemblance. It is in Hegel rather that we discover a direct and obvious source of Raskolnikov's notion of inferior and superior men, the superior ones having the right to commit breaches of morality while their inferiors are obliged to mind their business, which is to stay put in the common rut. Now what Dostoevsky has done in devising Raskolnikov's justification is to convert into a theory of human nature what is in Hegel not a

* "Send me the Koran, and Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason,* and if you have the chance of sending me anything not officially, then be sure to send Hegel, particularly Hegel's *Philosophy of History.* Upon that depends my whole future."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

psychological theory at all but a theory of men as subjects and objects of history. Hegel's world-historical individual—such as Alexander or Caesar or Napoleon, the very names invoked by Dostoevsky's protagonist—performs the grandiose tasks set for him by the *Weltgeist* irrespective of moral considerations; he can do no other, for, as Hegel puts it, "the history of the world moves on a higher level than that of morality." These heroes may "treat other great and even sacred interests inconsiderately—a conduct which subjects them to moral reprehension. But so mighty a figure may trample down many an innocent flower, crush to pieces many things in its path." Thus as the subject of history he rides roughshod over its mere objects or victims. Dostoevsky gives us a parody-version of Hegel's theory of two types of men by abstracting it from its historical logic. This enables him to entangle Raskolnikov in what is in truth a comedy of mistaken identity: an obvious victim of the historical process —a small man in search of personal security and happiness— laughably taking himself for its hero. In this sense he is no better than a clown, and he does indeed laugh at himself from time to time. "One sudden idea made him laugh. Napoleon, the pyramids, Waterloo, and a wretched skinny old woman, a pawnbroker with a red trunk under her bed. . . . It's too inartistic. A Napoleon creep under the old woman's bed! Ugh, how loathsome!"

However, though Raskolnikov refuses the historical action of the political rebel, and, instead of throwing a bomb at a general or even the Czar himself, he crushes the skull of an old woman with an axe, there is still something in his deed, for all its weird abjectness and ugliness, which in some sense comes through to us as a protest against the Petersburg misery and the ethics justifying it. One cannot but agree with Alberto Moravia's statement in his essay "The Marx-Dostoevsky Duel" that though "Raskolnikov had not read Marx and regards himself as a superman beyond good and evil, he was already, in embryo, a people's commissar."[5] Moravia is one of the very few

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Western commentators on the novel who has not overlooked its aborted political meaning, which emerges again and again, as when Raskolnikov dissociates himself from his friend Razumihin's abuse of the socialists. He understands very well that rebellion can take another form, the collective form advocated by the socialists. After all, what the socialists want, he remarks to himself, is the happiness of all. As it happens, however, he is not the one "to put his little brick into the happiness of all," for what he wants is to live properly here and now. Into his manuscript Dostoevsky inserted the following passage (later deleted) into a speech of Raskolnikov's: "What care I what will come to pass in the future. Is it possible to live at present? I cannot pass by with indifference all these horrors, this suffering and misery. I want power." Power for what purpose? Presumably to do good, to alleviate the suffering and misery. He is in a state of fatal self-contradiction, however, in that he attempts to further a common end of an altruistic character with egoistical and purely private means. In order to test his strength he needs more than anything else the support of a social faith. This is plainly seen by the examining magistrate, Porfiry Petrovitch, who is the one figure in the story who can be said manifestly to speak for the author, and it is he who says to Raskolnikov: "You made up a theory and then were ashamed that it broke down and turned out to be not at all original! It turned out something base, that's true, but you are not hopelessly base! . . . . How do I regard you? I regard you as one of those men who would stand and smile at their torturer while he cuts their entrails out, if only they have found faith or God." It is significant that the phrase is "faith *or* God," not faith *in* God, as if to say that there are other faiths besides the traditional one.

That Raskolnikov stands in an inauthentic relation to his crime is thus confirmed by the author's spokesman in the novel. The crime does not truly belong to him, and that is the reason he affects us as being almost ludicrously inadequate to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his deed, as when he faints in the police station the day right after the murder, even though there is as yet no suspicion attached to him, and calls attention to himself in other ways too. In spite of all his protestations to the contrary, he is prostrate with guilt and the yearning for punishment. It is not that he lacks the strength to kill and bear the responsibility for it to the end, but that he killed for himself alone, deranged by unconscious urges and over-conscious theories, rather than for the common cause to which his "nihilistic" generation was dedicated; and that is also the secret of Sonia's hold on him. There is no social substance in his anarchic individualism, as there is none in Sonia's idea of Christian salvation.

Sonia, "the eternal victim so long as the world lasts," is a small thin girl of eighteen, every feature of whose face reflects "a sort of insatiable compassion." Raskolnikov turns to her in his need because, as he tells her: "We are both accursed, so let us go together." She is the very embodiment of meekness and humility (far more so than Myshkin or Alyosha), and only Dostoevsky, with his uncanny powers of representation, could have brought her to life without blundering into mawkish sentimentality. But though he so brilliantly persuades us of her reality as a novelistic creation, this in itself in no sense constitutes a "proof" of her idea of Christian salvation. She proves quite as much the Nietzschean negation of it. It appears to me that it is precisely in his characterization of Sonia, rather than of Rasholnikov, that Dostoevsky's insight coincides with that of Nietzsche; the fact that the Russian arrives at that insight by way of assent, and the German by way of dissent, is scarcely to the point here. Thus Nietzsche speaks in his *Antichrist* of "that queer and sick world into which the Gospels introduce us—as in a Russian novel, a world into which the scum of society, nervous disorders, and 'childlike' idiocy seem to be having a rendezvous." Sonia is truly an inhabitant of that world, and she has the stirring charm of the mixture it exhibits —"a mixture of the sublime, the sickly and the childlike." No-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

where in literature do we find so striking a confirmation of Nietzsche's idea of the evangelical type as in the figure of Sonia. What is that type? It is one in whom "the incapacity for resistance becomes morality," who experiences "any resistance, even any compulsion to resist, as unendurable *displeasure* . . . and finds blessedness (pleasure) only in no longer offering any resistance to anybody, neither to evil nor to him who is evil—love as the only, as the *last* possible way of life." Significantly, Sonia's faith is not one that has been attained through struggle. When Raskolnikov challenges her faith, she answers with simple pathos: "What should I be without God?" This is the kind of faith which, as Nietzsche said, "has been there from the beginning; it is as it were an infantilism that has receded into the spiritual."[6] Plainly, Sonia's faith is of a sort that offers no solution to Raskolnikov, whose spiritual existence is incommensurable with hers. No wonder that the epilogue to the novel, in which he finally seems to be preparing himself to accept her outlook, has struck many readers as implausible and out of key with the work as a whole.

A few weeks after Dostoevsky's death in January 1881 a terrorist of the People's Will party by the name of Andrey Zhelyabov took part in the successful attempt on the life of Alexander II. He was caught and brought to trial, and this is what he had to say to the court: "I was baptized in the Orthodox Church but I reject Christianity, although I acknowledge the essential teaching of Jesus Christ. This essential teaching occupied an honored place among my moral incentives. I believe in the truth and righteousness of that teaching and I solemnly declare that faith without works is dead and that every true Christian ought to fight for the truth and for the rights of the oppressed and the weak, and even, if need be, to suffer for them. Such is my creed." Evidently the blood he shed did not weigh on Zhelyabov's conscience, for he went to his death on the gallows calm and impenitent. Raskolnikov, cheated of Zhelyabov's fate, goes to a Siberian prison in the same state of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

perplexity and outrage with which he undertook to carry out his "loathsome scheme." But, then, it was a hideous old harpy he killed, not the Czar of all the Russias.

Whatever the manifest theme of the novel, its latent theme is not that of crime as such or the criminal's innate need of punishment but the right to violent rebellion. It was the violence that Dostoevsky condemned, even as he was secretly drawn to it, fearing that if let loose it would tear down the authority both of heaven and earth, and Raskolnikov goes down to defeat to prove his creator right.

In its aspect as a polemic against the radical generation of the 1860's—whose obscurantist rationalism and notion of enlightened self-interest as the motive-force of human conduct Dostoevsky began satirizing in *Notes from Underground* — the novel depends on the sleight-of-hand of substituting a meaningless crime for a meaningful one. But if that were all, *Crime and Punishment* would not be the masterpiece it undoubtedly is. The very substitution of one type of crime for another set problems for Dostoevsky which he solved brilliantly by plunging his hero into a condition of pathology which ostensibly has nothing to do with the "heroic" theory by means of which he justifies himself. In his article "On Crime" Raskolnikov wrote that the perpetration of a crime is always accompanied by illness, and that is an exact description of his own case, though he believes himself to be another kind of criminal altogether, one acting from rational calculation and in the interests of a higher idea; the irony of his self-deception is among the finest effects of the book. And it is astonishing how well Dostoevsky was able to preserve the unity of his protagonist's character, to present him as all of a piece in spite of the fact that we are dealing not with one but with several Raskolnikovs. There is Raskolnikov the altruist and there is Raskolnikov the egoist, "a despot by nature"; there is the crypto-revolutionary Raskolnikov and there is the self-styled genius who demands power as his right and as the guaranty of his freedom; then of course there is the neurotic

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

who acts out his illness through a murder intellectually rationalized but inexplicable except in terms of an unconscious drive. After all, he conceives an "insurmountable repulsion" to Alyona Ivanonva, the old moneylender, weeks before he elaborates his murderous plan. Dostoevsky confronted the hazard of these contradictions with unequalled mastery. His capacity to combine them creatively in a single brain and a single psyche, while staving off the danger of incoherence at one end and of specious reconciliation as the other, is the measure of the victory scored in this novel by the imaginative artist in him over the ruthless polemicist.

NOTES

1. *Dostoevskii: zizn i tvorchestvo* (Paris, 1947), p. 243 ff.
2. *Dostoevskii i Nitsshe: filosofiya tragedii* (St. Petersburg, 1903).
3. *Der russische Realismus in der Weltliterature* (Berlin, 1949), p. 178.
4. *The Social History of Art,* (New York, 1952), Vol. 2, p. 854.
5. *Encounter,* November 1956.
6. *The Portable Nietzsche,* edited by Walter Kaufmann (New York, 1954), p. 602 ff.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

POEMS

DORA MARKUS

I
(1926)

It was where a plank pier
pushed from Porto Corsini into the open sea;
a handful of men, dull as blocks, drop,
draw in their nets. With a toss
of your thumb, you point out the other shore,
invisible, your true country.
Then we trailed a canal to the outlying shipyards,
silvered with sun and soot—
a patch of town-sick country, where depressed spring,
full of amnesia, was burning out.

Here where the old world's way of surviving
is mottled by a nervous
Levantine anxiety,
your words flash a rainbow,
like the scales of a choking mullet.

Your agitation makes me think
of migratory birds diving at a lighthouse
on an ugly night—
even your ennui is a whirlwind,
circling invisibly—
its let-ups non-existent.
I don't know how, so pressed, you've stood up
to that puddle of diffidence, your heart.
What saves you, perhaps,
is a charm, which you keep

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

near your lipstick, puff and nail-file—
a white mouse, made of ivory.
Thus you exist.

II
(1939)

In your own Carinthia now,
your corsage is the crescent
hedges of flowering myrtle . . .
you sashay on the curb of a stagnant pond,
and watch the carp timidily swallowing, swallowing,
or saunter under the lime trees,
and follow the kindling night
along the frowsy shorefront.
The mauve and orange awnings of landings
and *pensioni* throw
a bonfire on the water.

Night, blanketing
the fogging lake coves,
brings only the catcalls of geese,
the put-put-put of the outboards—
the snow-pure majolica of your interior
has seen you alter,
and tells your fly-blown mirror
a story of cool miscalculations,
now engraved where no sponge can expunge.

That's your legend, Dora!
but it is written already
on the moist lips of sugar daddies
with weak, masculine sideburns
in the ten inch gold frames
of the grand hotels—
it lives in the asthma

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the sprung harmonica
at the hour when daylight muddies, each day later.

It is written there!
The evergreen laurel lives on
by the kitchen, the voice doesn't change;
Ravenna, far away, distills
the venom of a ferocious faith.
What do I want from you?
Not that you surrender
voice, legend, or destiny. . . .

THE EEL

I

The eel, the North Sea siren,
who leaves dead-pan Icelandic gods
and the Baltic for our Mediterranean,
our estuaries, our rivers—
who lances through their profound places,
grinders of spate, from branch to branch,
twig to twig, thinning down now,
ever snaking inward, worming
for the clay's heartland, threading
delicate capillaries of slime—
and in the Romagna one morning
the blaze of the chestnut blossoms
ignites its smudge in the dead water
pooled from chiselings
of the Appenines . . .
the eel, a whipstock, a Roman candle,
love's arrow on earth, which only
in our gullies and fiery, charred streams

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

reaches the paradise of fecundity;
the green spirit, potent only
where desolation and arson gripe;
a spark that says everything
begins where everything is clinker;
the interred rainbow, a twin sister
of the one you set in your eye's target center
to shine on the sons of men,
on us, up to our gills in mud—
can you call her, *Sorella*?

II

If they called you a fox,
it will be for your monstrous hurtle,
your sprint that parts and unites,
that kicks up and freshens the gravel,
(your black lace balcony, overlooking
the home for deformed children, a meadow,
and a tree, where my carved name quivers,
happy, humble, defeated)—
or perhaps only for the phosphorescent wake
of your almond eyes,
for the craft of your alert panic,
for the annihilation of disheveled feathers
in your child's hand's python hug;
if they have likened you to the blond lioness,
to the avaricious demon of the undergrowth
(and why not to the filthy fish
that electrocutes, the torpedo fish?)
it is perhaps because the blind
have not seen the wings
on your delectable shoulder-blades,
because the blind haven't shot for
your forehead's luminous target,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the furrow I scratched there in blood,
cross, chrism, incantation, ejaculatory
prayer—damnation, salvation;
if they can only think of you
as a weasel or a woman,
with whom can I share my discovery,
where bury the gold I carry,
the bellied-out furnace raging
inside me, when, leaving me,
you turn up stairs?

Eugenio Montale
(*adapted by Robert Lowell*)

SEPTEMBER

In town, your friends play hide-and-seek
In dead leaves piled by the sidewalk.
Today I hiked along the creek,
Through stiff weeds and the sharp oat stalks,

Carrying my old binoculars;
I hoped to spot that small Green Heron
We saw together down the marsh
This August. He'd gone off on an errand.

Then too, of course this *is* September.
The newts in the creek had gone, already.
I don't know where. I can't remember
Your face or anything you said.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

RECONSTRUCTIONS

This Fall, we left your Grandma's
And had to leave your plant behind;
You said if no one watered it
And it would die, you didn't mind.
You mean to play the zinnia
In some sorry melodrama.

You offered me, one day, your doll
To sing songs to, bubble and nurse;
You said that was her birthday.
You reappeared then, grabbed her away,
Said just don't mess with her at all;
It was your child, yours.

And earlier this summer, how
You would tell the dog he had to "Stay!"
Then always let him sit
There, ears up, tense, all
Shivering to hear you call;
You turned and walked away.

We are like patients who rehearse
Old unbearable scenes
Day after day after day.
I memorize you, bit by bit,
And must restore you in my verses
To sell to magazines.

We keep what our times allow
And turn our grief into play.
We left you at your mother's; now
We've given the dog away.

W. D. Snodgrass

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FIAT JUSTITIA

Nature is better dressed than Man.
These various Birds and Fish,
Even the 'gator on his bank,
Can
Make one wish
We people weren't so rank.

And, most, the Humbled One,
Self-fluent, living Stream,
Upon his belly in the dust:
None
Of all seem
In better Taste.

His suiting modest, rich, subdued,
Choice custom drape
In stripe and weave correct:
Shrewd
For a Shape
So bitterly abject!

He, who originally rolled
"Erect," uplifted high
"His burnisht Neck of verdant
Gold,"
His head "Crested aloft" and eye
Observant,

Through which the sight of Eve at work
Stooping amid her "Flourie Plat,"
Converting Satan, could
Irk
Evil itself, the Plot forgot:
"Stupidly good";

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He whom the Tempter found
("Fearless unfeard he slept."
Why should he watch unwarned?)
And,
Within him crept,
Seized and suborned;

Brer Serpent, never a fool,
"Nor nocent yet"—a friend
To all—how should *he* know?
Tool
Only and
Punished so!

See now, the fly, the bream,
Bass, cormorant, gar and 'gator
Ravening. Was this all through
Him?
And later,
Bikinis too?

I. A. Richards

DREAM

At this waystation the ship goes through the narrows.
I have been here before. It is night.
An anchored barge appears or call it an island dock
Or bar like customs, alone forever. We edge against it,
Last stop before open sea.
Our ship must pass between locks.
I thought I would never see Far-land again. This is the last time,
I said. It is never the last.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Or never leave home again. Yet the voyage begins again.
Sprung from the deep
That fate, flat on the water like a raft,
My island, my isolate, waits.
Then carrying lanterns, single as lighthouse men,
Lighthouse turned darkhouse, quiet turned quay, men turned
shadow
In silence usher us through.
O never again will I come this way
I said. This way, never again.
No more! No more!
I thought: I have been here before.

Lenore Marshall

FLUSHING MEADOWS, 1939

Lightning! Lightning! Lightning! Without thunder!
A zaggedy white trombone of lightshot, crackling
Between metallic globules, egglike, hugely
Aching in the corner of our eyes,—
The afterburn of electrocuted air
Sizzled into our ears and nostrils, halfblinded
Us. We reeled into the dim sunshine
Groping a little, holding hands, still hearing
The confident vibrant voice of the sound system—
"Harnessed . . . power . . . unnumbered benefits . . ."
And this we pondered down the bedecked Concourse
Of Nations. A gold-robed King of Poland brandished
Crossed swords on horseback pedestaled on high;
The Soviet Citizen bore his sanguine star
Almost as high as that American flag
That snaffled in the smart wind perched atop
The Amusement Park's live parachute drop.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Trapped in antique mores, now the sun
Abandoned the International Pavilions
To miracles of manmade light. The trees
In their pots were underlit, revealing pasty
Backsides of their embarrassed leaves. We barked
The shins of our puppylove against the crowds
That swirled around us, swirled like fallen leaves
In the wind's vortex toward the Pool of Fountains:
Mauve and yellowing geysers surged and fell
As national anthems tolled, amity-wise,
From the State of Florida's Spanish Carillon.
What portent, in that luminous night, to share
Undyingly, discovery of each other!
Helen, Helen, thy beauty is to me
Like those immutable emblems, huge and pure,—
One glimmering globe the world's will unifying,
Beside spired hope that ravels the deep skies,
Our time's unnumbered benefits descrying
In their own light's shimmer though the new dawn comes
With lightning, lightening in a murmur of summer thunder.

Daniel G. Hoffman

METAPHORS FOR A PREGNANT WOMAN

I'm a riddle in nine syllables,
An elephant, a ponderous house,
A melon strolling on two tendrils.
O red fruit, ivory, fine timbers!
This loaf's big with its yeasty rising.
Money's new-minted in this fat purse.
I'm a means, a stage, a cow in calf.
I've eaten a bag of green apples,
Boarded the train there's no getting off.

Sylvia Plath

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ON FALLING ASLEEP TO BIRD SONG

In a tree at the edge of the clearing
A whippoorwill calls in the dark,
An American forest bird.
Lying in bed I hear him;
He is old, or at least no answer
Comes from the wood behind him;
I lose him there in the topmost
Invisible twigs in my head.

At the edge of the town I grow old
On a farm, sooner or later.
Lying alone at night
I remember my father and mother;
I see them, not tossing together
In their concern over me
But propped on separate pillows,
Going away like trees
A leaf at a time and angry
At the wingless, terrible trip;
And asking if they can stay.

I thrash in bed at forty
Reluctant to go on that trip.
I conjure nightingales
With their lovely lecherous song;
This is a question of will
And I conjure those silky birds
Tossing the boughs like bedsprings,
Fluting themselves to death
In music that will not cool.
Ah, I liked it better
With the randy foreign fowl
When summer had her fill.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But I am in bed in the fall
And cannot arrest the dream
That unwinds a chase and a rape
And ends in Thracian pain.

Although no bird comes,
The whippoorwill does not mourn.
At the bourn of human farms
He holds a constant song;
When time has gone away
He calls to what he calls.
Dark bird, we will prevail
If life indeed is one—
The fluting time and now,
Now and the pillow-time
Propped with knowledge and pain.
If some dark call repeats
And means the same and more,
The rest I will endure.
If it is one, dark bird
Who watch my middle sleep,
I will grow old, as a man
Will read of a transformation:
Knowing it is a fable
Contrived to answer a question
Answered, if ever, in fables,
Yet all of a piece and clever
And at some level, true.

William Meredith

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mary McCarthy

THE FACT IN FICTION*

I am scheduled, I find, to talk to you about "Problems of Writing a Novel." Where this title originated no one seems to know—doubtless in the same bureau that supplies titles for schoolchildren's compositions: "How I Spent my Summer Vacation" or "Adventures of a Penny" or simply "Why?" The problems of writing a novel, to those who do not write, can be reduced to the following questions: "Do you write in longhand or on the typewriter?" "Do you use an outline or do you invent as you go along?" "Do you draw your characters from real life or do you make them up or are they composites?" "Do you start with an idea, a situation, or a character?" "How many hours a day do you spend at your desk?" "Do you write on Sundays?" "Do you revise as you go along or finish a whole draft first?" And, finally, "Do you use a literary agent or do you market your stuff yourself?" Here curiosity fades; the manufacture and marketing of the product complete the story of a process, which is not essentially different from the "story" of flour as demonstrated to a class of boys and girls on an educational trip through a flour mill (from the grain of wheat to the sack on the grocer's shelf) or the "story" of a bottle of claret or of a brass safety pin. This is the craft of fiction, insofar as it interests the outsider, who may line up, after a lecture like this, to get the author's autograph, in lieu

* This is the text of a lecture delivered to several British audiences.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of a free sample—a miniature bottle of wine or a card of "baby" safety-pins.

Now I am not going to talk about the problems of the novel in this sense at all but rather to confront the fact that the writing of a novel has become problematic today. Is it still possible to write novels—in longhand or on the typewriter, standing or sitting, on Sundays or weekdays, with or without an outline? The answer, it seems to me, is certainly not yes and perhaps, tentatively, no. I mean real novels—not fairy tales or fables or romances or *contes philosophiques,* and I mean novels of a high order, like *War and Peace* or *Middlemarch* or *Ulysses* or the novels of Dickens, Dostoevsky or Proust. The manufacture of second-rate novels, or, rather, of facsimiles of the novel, is in no state of crisis; nor is there a difficulty in marketing them, with or without an agent. But almost no writer in the West of any consequence, let us say since the death of Thomas Mann, has been able to write a true novel; the exception is Faulkner, who is now an old man. What was the last novel, not counting Faulkner, that was written in our day? *Ulysses*? *Man's Fate*? Camus's *The Stranger*? Someone might say *Lolita,* and perhaps it is a novel, a freak, though, a sport or wild mutation, which everyone approaches with suspicion, as if it were a dangerous conundrum, a Sphinx's riddle.

What do I mean by a "novel"? A prose book of a certain thickness that tells a story of real life. No one could disagree with that, and yet many will disagree with much that I am going to say before I am through, so I shall try to be more specific. The words "prose" and "real" are crucial to my conception of the novel. The distinctive mark of the novel is its concern with the actual world, the world of fact, of the verifiable, of figures, even, and statistics. If I point to Jane Austen, Dickens, Balzac, George Eliot, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, the Melville of *Moby Dick,* Proust, the Joyce of *Ulysses,* Dreiser, Faulkner, it will be admitted that they are all novelists and that, different as they are from a formal point of view, they

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

have one thing in common: a deep love of fact, of the empiric element in experience. I am not interested in making a formal definition of the novel (it is really a very loose affair, a grab-bag or portmanteau, as someone has said) but in finding its *quidditas* or whatness, the essence or binder that distinguishes it from other species of prose fiction: the tale, the fable, the romance. The staple ingredient present in all novels in various mixtures and proportions but always in fairly heavy dosage is fact.

If a criterion is wanted for telling a novel from a fable or a tale or a romance (or a drama), a simple rule-of-thumb would be the absence of the supernatural. In fables and fairy tales, as everyone knows, birds and beasts talk. In novels, they don't; if you find birds and beasts talking in a book you are reading you can be sure it is not a novel. That takes care, for example, of *Animal Farm*. Men in novels may behave like beasts, but beasts in novels may not behave like men. That takes care of *Gulliver's Travels,* in case anyone were to mistake it for a novel. The characters in a novel must obey the laws of nature. They cannot blow up or fly or rise from the dead, as they can in plays, and if they talk to the devil, like Ivan Karamazov, the devil, though he speaks French, is not real like Faust's Mephistopheles, but a product of Ivan's derangement or fissionization. The devil is a part of Ivan. In the same way, in Mann's *Dr. Faustus,* the devil is no longer a member of the cast of characters but resident, you might say, in the fatal spirochete or syphilis germ. This is not a difference in period; Goethe did not believe in real devils either, but he could put one on the stage, because the stage accepts devils and even has a trapdoor ready for them to disappear through, with a flash of brimstone, just as it used to have a machine, up in the flies, for the gods to descend from. There are no gods in the novel and no machinery for them; to speak, even metaphorically, of a *deus ex machina* in a novel—that is, of the entrance of a providential figure from above—is to imply a shortcoming; Dickens

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is always criticized on this score. But a tale almost requires the appearance of a *deus ex machina* or magic helper. The devil can appear in person in a tale of Hawthorne's like "Young Goodman Brown," but not in Hawthorne's novel, *The Scarlet Letter,* though he may be there in spirit.

The novel does not permit occurrences outside the order of nature—miracles. Mr. Krook's going up in spontaneous combustion in his junkshop is a queer Punch-and-Judy note in *Bleak House.* Actually, Dickens thought science had found out that people could explode of their own force, but now it seems that they can't, that Mr. Krook couldn't; it would be all right in a fantasy or a pantomime but not in a novel. You remember how in *The Brothers Karamazov* when Father Zossima dies, his faction (most of the sympathetic characters in the book) expects a miracle: that his body will stay sweet and fresh because he died "in the odor of sanctity." But instead he begins to stink. The stink of Father Zossima is the natural, generic smell of the novel.

By the same law, a novel cannot be laid in the future, since the future, until it happens, is outside the order of nature; no prophecy or cautionary tale like *1984* is a novel. It is the same with public events in the past that never happened, for example the mutiny at the end of World War I led by a Christ-like corporal in Faulkner's *A Fable*; the title is Faulkner's warning to his readers that this volume, unlike his "regular" books, is not to be considered a novel but something quite different. Because the past appears, through recession, to be outside the order of nature (think how improbable and ghostly old photographs look), most historical novels, so-called, are romances, not novels: George Eliot's *Romola* in contrast to *Middlemarch.* This rule is broken by Tolstoy's *War and Peace,* a novel if there ever was one, and the reason for this is that history, as it were, has been purged by Tolstoy's harsh and critical realism of all "historical" elements—the flummery of costume, make-up, and accessories and the myths and lies

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of historians. The time, moreover (his grandfather's day) was not very remote from Tolstoy's own. When he experimented with writing a novel about the days of Ivan the Terrible, he found he could not do it. A borderline case is Stendhal's *The Charterhouse of Parma,* where actual history (Napoleon's entry into Milan; the Battle of Waterloo, so much admired by Tolstoy) is succeeded by mock-history—the spurious history of Parma, complete with numbered despots, prisons, and paid assassins, a travesty invented by Stendhal to correspond with the (literally) travestied Fabrizio in his violet stockings and with the mock-heroics of this section of the book. The book is a novel that turns into parody at the moment that history, in Stendhal's opinion, ceased to make sense and turned into a parody of the past. That moment was the triumph of reaction in Europe after 1815.

I ought to make it clear that these distinctions are in no way pejorative; I do not mean "Novel good, fable bad," merely "Novel novel; fable fable." *Candide* is not a novel, but to say so is not a criticism of *Candide*. Indeed, there are certain masterpieces—*Rameau's Nephew,* Gogol's *Dead Souls, The Charterhouse of Parma* itself—so quicksilver in their behavior that it is impossible to catch them in a category; these are usually "destructive" books, like *Candide,* where the author's aim is, among other things, to elude the authorities' grasp. When people nowadays tell you something is "not a novel," as they are fond of saying, for instance, about *Dr. Zhivago,* it is always in a querulous tone, as though someone had tried to put something over on them, sell them the Empire State Building or Trajan's Monument or the Palace of Culture, when *they* know better; they were not born yesterday. That is not my intention; I am not speaking as an aggrieved consumer of modern literature (and I admire *Dr. Zhivago* too passionately to demand its identity papers before I will let it pass); I am only trying to see why a special kind of literature, a relatively new kind, what we call the novel, is disappearing from view. To do that,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I must know what the novel is; it is like advertising for a missing person; first you need a description of what he looked like when last seen.

Let me begin with the birthmarks. The word novel goes back to the word "new," and in the plural it used to mean news—the news of the day or the year. Literary historians find the seed or the germ of the novel in Boccaccio's *Decameron,* a collection of tales set in a frame of actual life. This frame of actual life was the Great Plague of 1348 as it affected the city of Florence, where more than a hundred thousand people died between March and August. The figures and dates come from *The Decameron,* along with a great deal of other factual information about the Black Death: its origin in the East, some years before; its primary and secondary symptoms, differing from those in the East; the time between the appearance of the first symptoms—the tumors or buboes in the groin or armpits, some the size of a common apple, some of an egg, some larger, some smaller—and the onset of death; the means of contagion; the sanitary precautions taken; the medical theories current as to the proper diet and mode of life to stave off infection; the modes of nursing; the rites and methods of burial; and, finally, the moral behavior (very bad) of the citizens of Florence during the scourge. Boccaccio's account is supposed to be a pioneer contribution to descriptive medicine; it is also a piece of eyewitness journalism, not unlike the Younger Pliny's account of the eruption of Mount Vesuvius; the difference is that Pliny wrote his report in a letter (a classic literary form) and that Boccaccio's report is used in a new way, as a setting for a collection of fictions. The "realism," also new, of the separate tales, is grounded, so to speak, in the journalistic frame, with the dateline of a certain Tuesday morning, of the year 1348, when seven young ladies, between the ages of eighteen and twenty-eight, and three young men, the youngest twenty-five, met in the Church of Santa Maria Novella.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

If Boccaccio is the ancestor, the "father of the modern novel" is supposed to be Defoe, a Grub Street journalist, and the author of *Robinson Crusoe, Moll Flanders,* and many other works, including *The Journal of the Plague Year* (not Boccaccio's; another one—1664-1665). *Robinson Crusoe* was based on "a real life story," of a round-the-world voyage, which he heard described by the returned traveler and which he supplemented by another, a written account. Not only was the "father of the modern novel" a journalist, but he did not distinguish, at least to his readers, between journalism and fiction. All his stories pretend to be factual reports, documents, and one perhaps is—the life of a famous criminal "as told to Daniel Defoe," i.e., ghostwritten. This pretense, which might be called the reverse of plagiarism, the disclaiming, that is, of authorship rather than the claiming of it, was not a special pathological kink of Defoe's. The novel in its early stages almost always purports to be true. Where a fairy tale begins, "Once upon a time, in a certain kingdom," a tale of Boccaccio (chosen at random) begins: "You must know that after the death of Emperor Frederick II, the crown of Sicily passed to Manfred, whose favor was enjoyed to the highest degree by a gentleman of Naples, Arrighetto Capece by name, who had to wife Madonna Beritola Caracciola, a fair and gracious lady, likewise a Neapolitan. Now when Manfred was conquered and slain by King Charles I at Benevento . . . Arrighetto, etc., etc. . . ." The effect of this naming and placing makes of every story of Boccaccio's a sort of deposition, and this is even truer when the sphere is less exalted and the place is a neighboring village and the hero a well-known lecherous priest.

Many of the great novelists were newspaper reporters or journalists. Dickens had been a parliamentary reporter as a young man; in middle age, he became a magazine editor, and the scent of a "news story" is keen in all his novels. Dostoevsky, with his brother, edited two different magazines, one of which was called *Time* (*Vremya*); he supplied them with fiction

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and feature stories, and his specialty, you might say, was police reporting—he visited suspects (usually female) in prison, interviewed them, and wrote up his impressions; he also reported trials. Victor Hugo too was a confirmed prison-visitor; his "impressions" of prisons and of current political events—demonstrations, tumults, street-fighting—are collected in *Choses Vues*. Tolstoy first became widely known through his reports from Sebastopol, where he was serving as a young officer in the Crimean War; he was telling the news, the true, uncensored story of the Siege of Sebastopol, to the civilians back home, and throughout Tolstoy's work, most noticeably in *War and Peace* but in fact everywhere, there is heard the scathing directness of the young officer's tone, calling attention to the real facts behind the official dispatches—the real facts of war, sex, family life, glory, love, death. As he wrote in his second sketch from Sebastopol (which was immediately suppressed by the Czar), "The hero of my story . . . is—the Truth." Coming to the twentieth century, you meet the American novelist as newspaperman: Dreiser, Sinclair Lewis, Hemingway, O'Hara, Faulkner himself. The American novelist as newspaperman, in the 'twenties, became a stock figure in the American myth, so much so that the terms could be inverted and every obscure newspaperman, according to popular belief, had in his desk drawer, besides a pint of whiskey, the great American novel he was writing in his spare time.

There is another kind of "fact" literature closely related to the novel, and that is the travel book, which tells the news of the exotic. Melville's first book, *Typee,* was a book of travel, and you find something of the travelogue in Conrad, Kipling, and a good deal of D. H. Lawrence: *Aaron's Rod, The Plumed Serpent, Kangaroo,* "The Woman Who Rode Away." There is very little difference, really, between *Kangaroo,* a novel about Australia, and *Sea and Sardinia,* a travel book about Lawrence himself and Frieda in Sardinia. Hemingway remains half a war correspondent and half an explorer; *The Green Hills of Africa*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is his "straight" travel book. The type seems to go back to *Robinson Crusoe;* most of Conrad's heroes, in a sense, are stranded Robinson Crusoes, demoralized by consciousness. In a more conventional way, Dickens, Stendhal, Henry James all published journals of travel—"impressions." Mark Twain, Henry Miller, George Orwell (*Down and Out in Paris and London, Shooting an Elephant*)—the list is even more arresting if you consider the theater and try to imagine Ibsen, Shaw, or O'Neill as the authors of travel books. Yet Ibsen spent years abroad, in Italy and Germany, and O'Neill, like Melville and Conrad, went to sea as a young man.

The passion for fact in a raw state is a peculiarity of the novelist. Most of the great novels contain blocks and lumps of fact—refractory lumps in the porridge of the story. Students often complain of this in the old novels. They skip these "boring parts" to get on with the story, and in America a branch of publishing specializes in shortened versions of novels—"cut for greater reading speed." Descriptions and facts are eliminated, and only the pure story, as it were the scenario, is left. But a novel that was only a scenario would not be a novel at all.

Everyone knows that Balzac was a lover of fact. He delighted in catalogues of objects, inventories, explanations of the way institutions and industries work, how art is collected, political office is bought, fortunes are amassed or hoarded. One of his novels, *Les Illusions Perdues*, has a chapter which simply describes the way paper is made. The chapter has nothing to do with the action of the novel (it comes in because the hero has inherited a paper factory); Balzac put it in because he happened at the time to know something about the paper business. He loved facts of every kind indiscriminately—straight facts, curious facts, quirks, oddities, aberrations of fact, figures, statistics. He collected them and stored them, like one of his own misers, intending to house them in that huge structure, *The Human Comedy,* which is at once a scale model of the real world and a museum of curios left to mankind as though by a crazy hermit who could never throw anything away.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This fetishism of fact is generally treated as a sort of disease of realism of which Balzac was the prime clinical exhibit. But this is not the case. You find the splendid sickness in realists and non-realists alike. *Moby Dick,* among other things, is a compendium of everything that was to be known about whaling. The chapters on the whale and on whiteness, which are filled with curious lore, truths that are "stranger than fiction," interrupt and "slow down" the narrative, like the excursus on paper. Yet they cannot be taken away (as the excursus on paper certainly could be) without damaging the novel; *Moby Dick* without these chapters (in the stage and screen versions) is not *Moby Dick.* Or think of the long chapter on the Russian Monk in *The Brothers Karamazov.* Father Zossima is about to enter the scene, and, before introducing him, Dostoevsky simply stops and writes a history of the role of the elder in Russian monasticism. In the same way, in *War and Peace,* when Pierre gets interested in Freemasonry, Tolstoy stops and writes an account of the Masonic movement, for which he had been boning up in the library. Everyone who has read *War and Peace* remembers the Battle of Borodino, the capture and firing of Moscow, the analysis of the character of Napoleon, the analysis of the causes of war, and the great chapter on Freedom and Necessity, all of which are non-fiction and which constitute the very terrain of the novel; indeed, it could be said that the real plot of *War and Peace* is the struggle of the characters not to be immersed, engulfed, swallowed up by the landscape of fact and "history" in which they, like all human beings, have been placed: freedom (the subjective) is in the fiction, and necessity is in the fact. I have already mentioned the first chapter of *The Charterhouse of Parma* describing Napoleon's entry into Milan. In *The Magic Mountain,* there are the famous passages on tuberculosis, recalling Boccaccio's description of the plague, and the famous chapter on time, a philosophical excursus like the chapter on whiteness in *Moby Dick* and the chapter on Freedom and Necessity in Tolstoy

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Closer to Balzac is Dreiser's picture of the hotel business in *An American Tragedy*; when Clyde becomes a bellhop, Dreiser (though this is not "important" to the story) stops and shows the reader how a hotel, behind the scenes, works.

In newspaper jargon, you might call all this the boiler-plate of the novel—durable informative matter set up in stereotype and sold to country newspapers as filler to eke out a scarcity of local news, i.e., of "plot." And the novel, like newspaper boilerplate, contains not only a miscellany of odd facts but household hints and how-to-do-it instructions (you can learn how to make strawberry jam from *Anna Karenina* and how to reap a field and hunt ducks).

The novel, to repeat, has or had many of the functions of a newspaper. Dickens' novels can be imagined in terms of headlines: "Antique Dealer Dies by Spontaneous Combustion in Shop," "Financial Wizard Falls, Panic Among Speculators," "Blackleg Miner Found Dead in Quarry." Henry James, who did his best to exclude every bit of boiler-plate from his books and who may have killed the novel, perhaps with kindness (consider the unmentionable small article manufactured by the Newsomes in *The Ambassadors;* what was it? Garters? Safety pins?), even James has the smell of newsprint about him, the smell of the Sunday supplement. His international plots recall the magazine section of the old Hearst newspaper chain, in which every Sunday, after church, Americans used to read about some international marriage between an American heiress and a titled fortune-hunter.

Novels, including James's, carried the news—of crime, high society, politics, industry, finance, and low life. In Dickens you find a journalistic coverage of the news on all fronts and a survey of all the professions from pickpocket to banker, from lawyer to grave-robber. His books tell the whole story of Victorian society, from the front page to the financial section. This ideal of coverage requires him, in fairness, to print, as it were, corrections; a bad Jew is followed by a good Jew, a bad

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lawyer by a good one, a bad school by a good one, and so on. Or, to put it another way, it is as though he were launching a great roomy Noah's Ark with two of each species of creation aboard. In a single book, *Middlemarch,* George Eliot "covers" English life and institutions, as found at their median point—a middling provincial town. The notion of coverage by professions was taken up, somewhat mechanically, by the American novelists Dreiser and Sinclair Lewis. You can hear it in Dreiser's titles: *The Titan, The Financier, The Genius, Twelve Men.* Lewis ticked off the housewife (*Main Street*), the realtor (*Babbit*), the scientist (*Arrowsmith*), the preacher (*Elmer Gantry*), the social worker (*Ann Vickers*), the retired business man (*Dodsworth*). A similar census, though of more mobile social types, is seen in Dos Passos. It is Faulkner, however, the most "mythic" of recent American novelists, who has documented a society more completely than any of the realists. Like Dickens, he has set himself the task of a Second Creation. Yoknapatawpha County (capital, Jefferson), Mississippi, is presided over by its courthouse (*Requiem for a Nun*), where its history and vital statistics are on file; we know its population of lawyers, storekeepers, business men, farmers, black and white, and their forbears and how they made or lost their money; we know its idiots and criminals and maniacs, its geology and geography, flora and fauna (the Bear of that story and the cow of *The Hamlet*); some editions of Faulkner include a map of Yoknapatawpha County, and a letter addressed to Faulkner at Jefferson, Mississippi, would almost certainly reach him, although there is no such place.

The more poetic a novel, the more it has the air of being a factual document. I exaggerate when I say this, but if you think of Faulkner, of *Moby Dick,* of *Madame Bovary* or Proust, you will see there is something in it. Joyce's *Ulysses* is a case in point. There is no doubt that Joyce intended to reconstruct, almost scientifically, twenty-four hours of a certain day in Dublin; the book, among other things, is an exercise in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mnemonics. Stephen and Mr. Bloom, in their itineraries, cover certain key points in the life of the city—the beach, the library, the graveyard, the cabman's stand, Nighttown—and a guide to Joyce's Dublin has been published, with maps and a key. Nor is it by chance that the peripatetic Mr. Bloom is an advertising *canvasser.* He travels back and forth and up and down in society like Ulysses, who explored the four corners of the known world. The epic, I might put in here, is the form of all literary forms closest to the novel; it has the "boiler-plate," the lists and catalogues, the circumstantiality, the concern with numbers and dimensions. The epic geography, like that of the novel, can be *mapped,* in both the physical and the social sense.

This clear locative sense is present in all true novels. Take Jane Austen. *Emma* and *Pride and Prejudice* contain few facts of the kind I have been speaking of—nothing like the paper business or the history of the Russian monk. Yet there are facts of a different sort, documents like Mr. Collins's letters, charades, riddles, dance programs (" 'Then the two third he danced with Miss King, and the two fourth with Maria Lucas, and the two fifth with Jane again, and the two sixth with Lizzy, and the *Boulanger*—' "), menus— feminine facts, so to speak—and a very painstaking coverage, of a genteel class within the confines of a certain income range, marked off, like a frontier. One difference between Jane Austen and Henry James is that the reader of *Pride and Prejudice* knows exactly how much money the characters have: Mr. Bingley has four or five thousand a year (with a capital of nearly one hundred thousand); Mr. Bennet has two thousand a year, ENTAILED, while Mrs. Bennet brought him a capital of four thousand from her father, an attorney at Meryton; Mr. Darcy has ten thousand a year; his sister, Georgiana, has a capital of thirty thousand. The same with distances, ages, and time. Mr. and Mrs. Bennet have been married twenty-three years; Mrs. Weston, in *Emma,* has been Emma's governess for sixteen years; Mr. Knightley is about seven or eight and thirty; Emma is nearly twenty-one;

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Jane and Elizabeth, when they are finally married, live thirty miles apart; Highbury is about a mile from Mr. Knightley's property. Whenever the chance arises, Jane Austen supplies a figure. Everything is lucid and perspicuous in her well-charted world, except the weather, which is often unsettled, and this fact too is always noted ("The shower was heavy but short, and it had not been over five minutes when . . ."). The names of persons who are never seen in the story, like that of "Miss King" just now, are dropped as if artlessly to attest the veracity of the narrative—inviting the reader to clothe these names himself with the common identities of real life.

This air of veracity is very important to the novel. We do really (I think) expect a novel to be true, not only true to itself, like a poem or a statue, but true to actual life, which is right around the corner, like the figure of "Miss King." We not only make believe we believe a novel, but we do substantially believe it, as being continuous with real life, made of the same stuff, and the presence of fact in fiction, of dates and times and distances, is a kind of reassurance—a guarantee of credibility. If we read a novel, say, about conditions in post-war Germany, we expect it to be an accurate report of conditions in post-war Germany; if we find out that it is not, the novel is discredited. This is not the case with a play or a poem. Dante can be wrong in *The Divine Comedy;* it does not matter, with Shakespeare, that Bohemia has no seacoast, but if Tolstoy was all wrong about the Battle of Borodino or the character of Napoleon, *War and Peace* would suffer.

The presence of a narrator, writing in the first person, is another guarantee of veracity. The narrator is, precisely, an eye-witness, testifying to the reader that these things really happened, even though the reader knows of course that they did not. This is the function of the man called Marlow in Conrad's books; he is there to promise the reader that these faraway stories are true, and, as if Marlow himself were not enough, the author appears as a kind of character witness for

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Marlow, testifying to having met him in reliable company, over cigars, claret, a polished mahogany table, and so on. The same function is served by the narrator in Dostoevsky's *The Possessed,* who writes in the excited manner of a small-town gossip ("Then I rushed to Varvara Petrovna's") telling you everything that went on in that extraordinary period, which everybody in town is still talking about, that began when young Stavrogin bit the governor's ear. He tells what he saw himself and what he had on hearsay and pretends to sift the collective evidence as to what exactly happened and in what order. Faulkner's favorite narrator is Gavin Stevens, the lawyer, chosen obviously because the town lawyer, accustomed to weighing evidence, would be the most reliable witness—one of the first sources a newspaper reporter would be likely to consult.

There is the shadow of an "I" in *The Brothers Karamazov,* but *The Possessed* is the only important novel of Dostoevsky's that is told straight through in the first person, i.e., by a local busybody who seems to have seized the pen. *The Possessed* (in Russian *The Devils*) is the most demonic of all Dostoevsky's novels—the most "unnatural," unfilial, "Gothic." It would seem that the device of the narrator, the eye-witness "I," like Esther Summerson in *Bleak House* (not the autobiographical "I" of *David Copperfield* or of Proust's Marcel, who is something more than a witness), is more often used in novels whose material is exotic or improbable than in the plain novel of ordinary life, like *Middlemarch* or *Emma* or any of Trollope. These novels of ordinary life put no strain on the reader's credulity; he believes without the testimony of witnesses. The first-person narrator is found in Conrad, in Melville, and in *Wuthering Heights, Bleak House, Jane Eyre,* all of which center around drafty, spooky old houses and are related to the ghost story. In the same way James, who rarely used the first-person narrator, does so with the governess in his ghost-story, *The Turn of the Screw.* In other words, on the periphery of the novel, on the borderline of the tale or the adventure

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

story you find a host of narrators. And you arrive, finally, at *Lolita* and meet Humbert Humbert, telling his own story (which you might not have believed otherwise), having been first introduced by another narrator, his "editor," who authenticates his manuscript; Humbert himself has been executed. In short, you are back with Defoe and his "true biographies" of great criminals who were hanged, back at the birth of the novel, before it could stand without support.

Even when it is most serious, the novel's characteristic tone is one of gossip and tittletattle. You can hear it in the second sentence (originally the first sentence) of *Anna Karenina*: "Everything was upset at the Oblonskys." The cook, it seemed, had left; the underservants had given notice; the mistress was shut up in her bedroom because the master had been sleeping with the former French governess. This (I think) is a classic beginning, and yet some person who had never read a novel, coming on those sentences, so full of blunt malice, might conclude that Tolstoy was simply a common scandal-monger. The same might be thought of Dostoevsky, of Flaubert, Stendhal, and (obviously) of Proust, of the earnest George Eliot and the lively Jane Austen and the manly Charles Dickens. Most of these writers were people of high principle; their books, without exception, had a moral, ethical, or educational purpose. But the voice we overhear in their narratives, if we stop to listen for a minute, putting aside preconceptions, is the voice of a neighbor relating the latest gossip. "You will hardly believe what happened next," the novelists from Jane Austen to Kafka (yes indeed) seem to be exclaiming. "Wait and I'll tell you." The whole narrative method of Dostoevsky could be summed up in those two sentences. In Conrad, more ruminative, there can be heard the creaking of chairs as the men around the table settled down to listen to the indefatigable Marlow, who only halts to wet his whistle: "Pass the bottle." The scandals the novelists are primed with are the scandals of a village, a town, or a province—Highbury or Jefferson, Mississippi, or the Province

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of O., the scandals of a clique—the Faubourg St. Germain, of a city—Dublin or Middlemarch, or of a nation—Dickens's England, or of the ports and hiring offices—London or Nantucket, where news of the high seas is exchanged and a black mark put against a man's name or a vessel's. Here is another criterion: if the breath of scandal has not touched it, the book is not a novel. That is the trouble with the art-novel (most of Virginia Woolf, for instance); it does not stoop to gossip.

The scandals of a village or a province, the scandals of a nation or of the high seas feed on facts and breed speculation. But it is of the essence of a scandal that it be finite, for all its repercussions and successive enlargements. Indeed, its repercussions are like the echo produced in an enclosed space, a chambered world. That is why institutions ("closed corporations") are particularly prone to scandal; they attempt to keep the news in, contain it, and in doing so they magnify it, and then, as people say, "the lid is off." It is impossible, except for theologians, to conceive of a world-wide scandal or a universe-wide scandal; the proof of this is the way people have settled down to living with nuclear fission, radiation poisoning, hydrogen bombs, satellites, and space rockets. Nobody can get them excited about or even greatly interested in what-will-happen-next to the world; the plot does not thicken. In the same way, Hiroshima, despite the well-meant efforts of journalists and editors, probably caused less stir than the appearance of comets in the past; the magnitude of the event killed even curiosity. This was true, to some extent, of Buchenwald and Auschwitz too.

Yet these "scandals," in the theological sense, of the large world and the universe have dwarfed the finite scandals of the village and the province; who cares any more what happens in Highbury or the Province of O.? If the novelist cares, he blushes for it; that is, he blushes for his parochialism. *Middlemarch* becomes *Middletown* and *Middletown in Transition,* the haunt of social scientists, whose factual findings, even in the face of Auschwitz or a space-satellite, have a certain cachet because

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

they are supposed to be "science"; in science, all facts, no matter how trivial or banal, enjoy democratic equality. Among novelists, it is only Faulkner who does not seem to feel an itch of dissatisfaction with his sphere, and there are signs of this even in him—*A Fable,* for example.

But it is not only that the novelist of today, in "our expanding universe," is embarrassed by the insignificance (or lack of "significance") of his finite world. A greater problem is that he cannot quite believe in it. That is, the existence of Highbury or the Province of O. is rendered improbable, unveracious, by Buchenwald and Auschwitz, the population curve of China, and the hydrogen bomb. Improbable when "you stop to think"; this is the experience of everybody and not only of the novelist; if we stop to think for one second, arrested by some newspaper story or general reflection, our daily life becomes incredible to us. I remember reading the news of Hiroshima in a little general store on Cape Cod in Massachusetts and saying to myself as I moved up to the counter, "What am I doing buying a loaf of bread?" The coexistence of the great world and us, when contemplated, appears impossible.

It works both ways. The other side of the picture is that Buchenwald and Auschwitz are and were unbelievable, and not just to the German people, whom we criticize for forgetting them; we all forget them, as we forget the hydrogen bomb, because their special quality is to stagger belief. And here is the dilemma of the novelist, which is only a kind of professional sub-case of the dilemma of everyone: if he writes about his province, he feels its inverisimilitude; if he tries, on the other hand, to write about people who make lampshades of human skin, like the infamous Ilse Koch, he feels still more the inverisimilitude of what he is asserting. His love of truth revolts. And yet this love of truth, ordinary common truth recognizable to everyone, is the ruling passion of the novel. Putting two and two together, then, it would seem that the novel, with its common sense, is of all forms the least adapted to encompass the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

modern world, whose leading characteristic is irreality. And that, so far as I can understand, is why the novel is dying. The souped-up novels that are being written today, with injections of myth and symbols to heighten or "deepen" the material, are simply evasions and forms of self-flattery.

I spoke just now of common sense—the prose of the novel. We are all supposed to be born with it, in some degree, but we are also supposed to add to it by experience and observation. But if the world today has become inaccessible to common sense, common sense in terms of broad experience simultaneously has become inaccessible to the writer. The novelists of the nineteenth century had, both as public persons and private figures, great social range; they "knew everybody," whether because of their fame in the great capitals of London, Paris, St. Petersburg, or in their village, province, or county, where everybody knows everybody as a matter of course. Today the writer has become specialized, like the worker on an assembly line whose task is to perform a single action several hundred times a day or the doctor whose task is to service a single organ of the human body. The writer today is turning into a *machine à ecrire,* a sort of human typewriter with a standardized mechanical output: hence the meaning of those questions ("How many hours a day?" "How long does it take you?" "Have you ever thought of using a dictaphone?"). This standardization and specialization is not only a feature of his working hours but of his social existence. The writer today—and especially the young American writer—sees only other writers; he does not know anyone else. His social circle comprises other writers and his girl friends, but his girl friends, usually, are hoping to be writers too. The writer today who has a painter for a friend is regarded as a broad-ranging adventurer, a real man of the world. If he teaches in a university, his colleagues are writers or at any rate they "publish," and his students, like his girl friends, are hoping to write themselves. This explains the phenomenon, often regarded as puzzling, of the "one-book"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

American writer, the writer who starts out with promise and afterwards can only repeat himself or fade away. There is nothing puzzling about it; he wrote that first book before he became a writer, while he was still an ordinary person. The worst thing, I would say, that can happen to a writer today is to become a writer. And it is most fatal of all for the novelist; the poet can survive it, for he does not need society for his verse, and poets have always clubbed together with other poets in exclusive coteries, which is perhaps why Plato wanted them banned from the Republic.

The isolation of the modern writer is a social fact, and not just the writer's own willful fault. He cannot help being "bookish," which cuts him off from society, since practically the only people left who read are writers, their wives and girl friends, teachers of literature, and students hoping to become writers. The writer has "nothing in common" with the business man or the worker, and this is almost literally true; there is no common world left in which they share. The business man who does not read is just as specialized as the writer who writes.

To throw off this straitjacket is the recurrent dream of the modern novelist, after the age, say, of thirty or thirty-five; before that, his dream was the opposite: to come to New York (or Paris or London) to meet other writers. Various ways out are tried: moving to the country, travel, "action" (some form of politics), the resolute cultivation of side-interests—music, art, sport, gardening; sport is very popular with American men novelists, who hold on to an interest in baseball or a tennis racket or a fishing-rod as a relic of the "complete man" or complete boy they once were. But if these steps are sufficiently radical, their effect may be the reverse of what was intended. This is what seems to have happened to Gide, D. H. Lawrence, Malraux, Camus, George Orwell. Starting as novelists, they fled, as it were, in all directions from the tyranny of the novelist's specialization: into politics, diary-keeping, travel and travel-writing, war, art history, journalism, "engagement." Nor did

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

they ever really come back to the novel, assuming that was what they wanted to do. Gide stopped with *The Counterfeiters;* Lawrence with *Women in Love;* Malraux with *Man's Fate;* Orwell with his first book, *Burmese Days;* Camus with *The Stranger.* Their later books are not novels, even if they are called so, but fables of various kinds, tracts, and parables. But they did not settle down to a single form or mode, and this perpetual restlessness which they have in common seems a sign of an unrequited, unconsummated love for the novel, as though in the middle of their *oeuvre* there were a void, a blank space reserved for the novel they failed to be able to write. We think of them as among the principal "novelists" of our time, but they were hardly novelists at all, and in each case their work as a whole has an air of being unfinished, dangling.

They are certainly key modern figures. Allowing for differences in talent, their situation is everybody's; mine too. We are all in flight from the novel and yet drawn back to it, as to some unfinished and problematic relationship. The novel seems to be dissolving into its component parts: the essay, the travel book, reporting, on the one hand, and the "pure" fiction of the tale, on the other. The center will not hold. No structure (except Faulkner's) has been strong enough to keep in suspension the diverse elements of which the novel is made. You can call this, if you want, a failure of imagination. We know that the real world exists, but we can no longer imagine it.

Yet despite all I have been saying, I cannot, being human, help feeling that the novel is not finished yet. Tomorrow is another day. Someone, somewhere, even now may be dictating into a dictaphone: "At five o'clock in the afternoon, in the capital of the Province of Y., a tall man with an umbrella was knocking at the door of the governor's residence." In short, someone may be able to believe again in the reality, the factuality, of the world.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Doris Lessing

OUR FRIEND JUDITH

I stopped inviting Judith to meet people when a Canadian woman remarked, with the satisfied fervor of one who has at last pinned a label on a rare specimen: "She is, of course, one of your typical English spinsters."

This was a few weeks after an American sociologist, having elicited from Judith the facts that she was forty-ish, unmarried, and living alone, had inquired of me: "I suppose she has given up?" "Given up what?" I asked; and the subsequent discussion was unrewarding.

Judith did not easily come to parties. She would come after pressure, not so much—one felt—to do one a favor, but in order to correct what she believed to be a defect in her character. "I really ought to enjoy meeting new people more than I do," she said once. We reverted to an earlier pattern of our friendship: odd evenings together, an occasional visit to the cinema, or she would telephone to say: "I'm on my way past you to the British Museum. Would you care for a cup of coffee with me? I have twenty minutes to spare."

It is characteristic of Judith that the word spinster, used of her, provoked fascinated speculation about other people. There are my aunts, for instance: aged seventy-odd, both unmarried, one an ex-missionary from China, one a retired matron of a famous London hospital. These two old ladies live together under the shadow of the Cathedral in a country town. They devote much time to the Church, to good causes, to letter writing with friends all over the world, to the grand-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

children and the great-grand-children of relatives. It would be a mistake, however, on entering a house in which nothing has been moved for fifty years, to diagnose a condition of fossilized late-Victorian integrity. They read every book reviewed in the *Observer* or the *Times,* so that I recently got a letter from Aunt Rose inquiring whether I did not think that the author of *On the Road* was not perhaps—exaggerating his difficulties? They know a good deal about music, and write letters of encouragement to young composers they feel are being neglected —"You must understand that anything new and original takes time to be understood." Well-informed and critical Tories, they are as likely to dispatch telegrams of protest to the Home Secretary as letters of support. These ladies, my aunts Emily and Rose, are surely what is meant by the phrase *English spinster.* And yet, once the connection has been pointed out, there is no doubt that Judith and they are spiritual cousins, if not sisters. Therefore it follows that one's pitying admiration for women who have supported manless and uncomforted lives needs a certain modification?

One will, of course, never know; and I feel now that it is entirely my fault that I shall never know. I had been Judith's friend for upwards of five years before the incident occurred which I involuntarily thought of—stupidly enough—as "the first time Judith's mask slipped."

A mutual friend, Betty, had been given a cast-off Dior dress. She was too short for it. Also she said: "It's not a dress for a married woman with three children and a talent for cooking. I don't know why not, but it isn't." Judith was the right build. Therefore one evening the three of us met by appointment in Judith's bedroom, with the dress. Neither Betty nor I were surprised at the renewed discovery that Judith was beautiful. We had both too often caught each other, and ourselves, in moments of envy when Judith's calm and severe face, her undemonstratively perfect body, succeeded in making everyone else in a room or a street look cheap.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Judith is tall, small-breasted, slender. Her light brown hair is parted in the center and cut straight around her neck. A high straight forehead, straight nose, a full grave mouth are setting for her eyes, which are green, large and prominent. Her lids are very white, fringed with gold, and molded close over the eyeball, so that in profile she has the look of a staring gilded mask. The dress was of dark green glistening stuff, cut straight, with a sort of loose tunic. It opened simply at the throat. In it Judith could of course evoke nothing but classical images. Diana, perhaps, back from the hunt, in a relaxed moment? A rather intellectual wood nymph who had opted an afternoon in the British Museum reading room? Something like that. Neither Betty nor I said a word, since Judith was examining herself in a long mirror, and must know she looked magnificent.

Slowly she drew off the dress and laid it aside. Slowly she put on the old cord skirt and woolen blouse she had taken off. She must have surprised a resigned glance between us, for she then remarked, with the smallest of mocking smiles: "One surely ought to stay in character, wouldn't you say?" She added, reading the words out of some invisible book, written not by her, since it was a very vulgar book, but perhaps by one of us: "It does everything *for* me, I must admit."

"After seeing you in it," Betty cried out, defying her, "I can't bear for anyone else to have it. I shall simply put it away." Judith shrugged, rather irritated. In the shapeless skirt and blouse, and without makeup, she stood smiling at us, a woman at whom forty-nine out of fifty people would not look twice.

A second revelatory incident occurred soon after. Betty telephoned me to say that Judith had a kitten. Did I know that Judith adored cats? "No, but of course she would," I said.

Betty lived in the same street as Judith and saw more of her than I did. I was kept posted about the growth and habits of the cat and its effect on Judith's life. She remarked

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for instance that she felt it was good for her to have a tie and some responsibility. But no sooner was the cat out of kittenhood than all the neighbors complained. It was a tomcat, ungelded, and making every night hideous. Finally the landlord said that either the cat or Judith must go, unless she was prepared to have the cat "fixed." Judith wore herself out trying to find some person, anywhere in Britain, who would be prepared to take the cat. This person would, however, have to sign a written statement not to have the cat "fixed." When Judith took the cat to the vet to be killed, Betty told me she cried for twenty-four hours.

"She didn't think of compromising? After all, perhaps the cat might have preferred to live, if given the choice?"

"Is it likely I'd have the nerve to say anything so sloppy to Judith? It's the nature of a male cat to rampage lustfully about, and therefore it would be morally wrong for Judith to have the cat fixed, simply to suit her own convenience."

"She said that?"

"She wouldn't have to *say* it, surely?"

A third incident was when she allowed a visiting young American, living in Paris, the friend of a friend and scarcely known to her, to use her flat while she visited her parents over Christmas. The young man and his friends lived it up for ten days of alcohol and sex and marijuana, and when Judith came back it took a week to get the place clean again and the furniture mended. She telephoned twice to Paris, the first time to say that he was a disgusting young thug and if he knew what was good for him he would keep out of her way in the future; the second time to apologize for losing her temper. "I had a choice either to let someone use my flat, or to leave it empty. But having chosen that you should have it, it was clearly an unwarrantable infringement of your liberty to make any conditions at all. I do most sincerely ask your pardon." The moral aspects of the matter having been made clear, she was

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

irritated rather than not to receive letters of apology from him —fulsome, embarrassed, but above all, baffled.

It was the note of curiosity in the letters—he even suggested coming over to get to know her better—that irritated her most. "What do you suppose he means?" she said to me. "He lived in my flat for ten days. One would have thought that should be enough, wouldn't you?"

The facts about Judith, then, are all in the open, unconcealed, and plain to anyone who cares to study them; or, as it became plain she feels—to anyone with the intelligence to interpret them.

She has lived for the last twenty years in a small two-roomed flat high over a busy West London street. The flat is shabby and badly heated. The furniture is old, was never anything but ugly, is now frankly rickety and fraying. She has an income of £200 a year from a dead uncle. She lives on this and what she earns from her poetry, and from lecturing on poetry to night classes and extra-mural University classes.

She does not smoke or drink, and eats very little, from preference, not self-discipline.

She studied poetry and biology at Oxford, with distinction.

She is a Castlewell. That is, she is a member of one of the academic upper-middle-class families, which have been producing for centuries a steady supply of brilliant but sound men and women who are the backbone of the arts and sciences in Britain. She is on cool good terms with her family who respect her and leave her alone.

She goes on long walking tours, by herself, in such places as Exmoor or West Scotland.

Every three or four years she publishes a volume of poems.

The walls of her flat are completely lined with books. They are scientific, classical and historical; there is a great deal of poetry and some drama. There is not one novel. When Judith says: "Of course I don't read novels," this does not mean that novels have no place, or a small place, in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

literature; or that people should not read novels; but that it must be obvious she can't be expected to read novels.

I had been visiting her flat for years before I noticed two long shelves of books, under a window, each shelf filled with the works of a single writer. The two writers are not, to put it at the mildest, the kind one would associate with Judith. They are mild, reminiscent, vague and whimsical. Typical English *belles-lettres,* in fact, and by definition abhorrent to her. Not one of the books in the two shelves has been read; some of the pages are still uncut. Yet each book is inscribed or dedicated to her: gratefully, admiringly, sentimentally and, more than once, amorously. In short, it is open to anyone who cares to examine these two shelves, and to work out dates, to conclude that Judith from the age of fifteen to twenty-five had been the beloved young companion of one elderly literary gentleman, and from twenty-five to thirty-five, the inspiration of another.

During all that time she had produced her own poetry, and the sort of poetry, it is quite safe to deduce, not at all likely to be admired by her two admirers. Her poems are always cool and intellectual; that is their form, which is contradicted or supported by a gravely sensuous texture. They are poems to read often; one has to, to understand them.

I did not ask Judith a direct question about these two eminent but rather fusty lovers. Not because she would not have answered, or because she would have found the question impertinent, but because such questions are clearly unnecessary. Having those two shelves of books where they are, and books she could not conceivably care for, for their own sake, is publicly giving credit where credit is due. I can imagine her thinking the thing over, and deciding it was only fair, or perhaps honest, to place the books there; and this despite the fact that she would not care at all for the same attention to be paid to her. There is something almost contemptuous in it. For she certainly despises people who feel they need attention.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

For instance, more than once a new emerging wave of "modern" young poets have discovered her as the only "modern" poet among their despised and well-credited elders. This is because, since she began writing at fifteen, her poems have been full of scientific, mechanical and chemical imagery. This is how she thinks, or feels.

More than once has a young poet hastened to her flat, to claim her as an ally, only to find her totally and by instinct unmoved by words like modern, new, contemporary. He has been outraged and wounded by her principle, so deeply rooted as to be unconscious, and to need no expression but a contemptuous shrug of the shoulders, that publicity seeking or to want critical attention is despicable. It goes without saying that there is perhaps one critic in the world she has any time for. He has sculked off, leaving her on her shelf, which she takes it for granted is her proper place, to be read by an appreciative minority.

Meanwhile she gives her lectures, walks alone through London, writes her poems, and is seen sometimes at a concert or a play with a middle-aged professor of Greek who has a wife and two children.

Betty and I had speculated about this Professor, with such remarks as: Surely she must sometimes be lonely? Hasn't she ever wanted to marry? What about that awful moment when one comes in from somewhere at night to an empty flat?

It happened recently that Betty's husband was on a business trip, her children visiting, and she was unable to stand the empty house. She asked Judith for a refuge until her own home filled again.

Afterwards Betty rang me up to report:

"Four of the five nights Professor Adams came in about ten or so."

"Was Judith embarrassed?"

"Would you expect her to be?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Well if not embarrassed at least conscious there was a situation?"

"No, not at all. But I must say I don't think he's good enough for her. He can't possibly understand her. He calls her Judy."

"Good God."

"Yes. But I was wondering. Suppose the other two called her Judy—'little Judy'—imagine it! Isn't it awful? But it does rather throw a light on Judith?"

"It's rather touching."

"I suppose it's touching. But *I* was embarrassed—oh, not because of the situation. Because of how she was, with him. 'Judy, is there another cup of tea in that pot?' And she, rather daughterly and demure, pouring him one."

"Well yes, I can see how you felt."

"Three of the nights he went to her bedroom with her—very casual about it, because she was being. But he was not there in the mornings. So I asked her. You know how it is when you ask her a question. As if you've been having long conversations on that very subject for years and years, and she is merely continuing where you left off last. So when she says something surprising, one feels such a fool to be surprised?"

"Yes. And then?"

"I asked her if she was sorry not to have children. She said yes, but one couldn't have everything."

"One can't have everything, she said?"

"Quite clearly feeling she *has* nearly everything. She said she thought it was a pity, because she would have brought up children very well."

"When you come to think of it, she could, too."

"I asked about marriage, but she said on the whole the role of a mistress suited her better."

"She used the word mistress?"

"You must admit it's the accurate word."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I suppose so."

"And then she said that while she liked intimacy and sex and everything, she enjoyed waking up in the morning alone and *her own person.*"

"Yes, *of course.*"

"Of course. But now she's bothered because the Professor would like to marry her. Or he feels he ought. At least, he's getting all guilty and obsessive about it. She says she doesn't see the point of divorce, and anyway, surely it would be very hard on his poor old wife after all these years particularly after bringing up two children so satisfactorily. She talks about his wife as if she's a kind of nice old charwoman, and it wouldn't be *fair* to sack her, you know. Anyway. What with one thing another Judith's going off to Italy soon in order *to collect herself.*"

"But how's she going to pay for it?"

"Luckily the Third Programme's commissioning her to do some arty programs. They offered her a choice of The Cid—El Thid, you know—and the Borgias. Well, the Borghese, then. And Judith settled for the Borgias."

"The Borgias," I said, "*Judith*?"

"Yes quite. I said that too, in that tone of voice. She saw my point. She says the epic is right up her street, whereas the Renaissance has never been on her wave length. Obviously it couldn't be, all the magnificence and cruelty and *dirt.* But of course chivalry and a high moral code and all those idiotically noble goings-on are right on her wave length."

"Is the money the same?"

"Yes. But is it likely Judith would let money decide? No, she said that one should always choose something new, that isn't up one's street. Well, because it's better for her character, and so on, to get herself unsettled by the Renaissance. She didn't say *that,* of course."

"Of course not."

Judith went to Florence; and for some months postcards

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

informed us tersely of her doings. Then Betty decided she must go by herself for a holiday. She had been appalled by the discovery that if her husband was away for a night she couldn't sleep; and when he went to Australia for three weeks, she stopped living until he came back. She had discussed this with him, and he had agreed that, if she really felt the situation to be serious, he would despatch her by air, to Italy, in order to recover her self-respect. As she put it.

I got this letter from her: "Its no use, I'm coming home. I might have known. Better face it, once you're really married you're not fit for man nor beast. And if you remember what I used to be like! *Well!* I moped around Milan. I sunbathed in Venice, then I thought my tan was surely worth something, so I was on the point of starting an affair with another lonely soul, but I lost heart, and went to Florence to see Judith. She wasn't there. She'd gone to the Italian Riviera. I had nothing better to do, so I followed her. When I saw the place I wanted to laugh, it's so much not Judith, you know, all those palms and umbrellas and gaiety at all costs and ever such an ornamental blue sea. Judith is in an enormous stone room up on the hillside above the sea, with grape-vines all over the place. You should see her, she's got beautiful. It seems for the last fifteen years she's been going to Soho every Saturday morning to buy food at an Italian shop. I must have looked surprised, because she explained she liked Soho. I suppose because all that dreary vice and nudes and prostitutes and everything prove how right she is to be as she is? She told the people in the shop she was going to Italy, and the signora said, what a coincidence, she was going back to Italy too, and she did hope an old friend like Miss Castlewell would visit her there. Judith said to me: 'I felt lacking, when she used the word friend. Our relations have always been formal. Can you understand it?' she said to me. 'For fifteen years,' I said to her. She said: 'I think I must feel it's a kind of imposition, don't you know, expecting people to feel friendship for one.' *Well.* I said:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

'You ought to understand it, because you're like that yourself.' 'Am I?' she said. 'Well think about it,' I said. But I could see she didn't want to think about it. Anyway, she's here, and I've spent a week with her. The widow Maria Rineiri inherited her mother's house, so she came home, from Soho. On the ground floor is a tatty little Rosticcheria patronized by the neighbors. They are all working people. This isn't tourist country, up on the hill. The widow lives above the shop with her little boy, a nasty little brat of about ten. Say what you like, the English are the only people who know how to bring up children, I don't care if that's insular. Judith's room is at the back, with a balcony. Underneath her room is the barber's shop, and the barber is Luigi Rineiri, the widow's younger brother. Yes, I was keeping him until the last. He is about forty, tall dark handsome, a great *bull,* but rather a sweet fatherly bull. He has cut Judith's hair and made it lighter. Now it looks like a sort of gold helmet. Judith is all brown. The widow Rineiri has made her a white dress and a green dress. They fit, for a change. When Judith walks down the street to the lower town, all the Italian males take one look at the golden girl and melt in their own oil like ice cream. Judith takes all this in her stride. She sort of acknowledges the homage. Then she strolls into the sea and vanishes into the foam. She swims five miles every day. *Naturally.* I haven't asked Judith whether she has collected herself, because you can see she hasn't. The widow Rineiri is match-making. When I noticed this I wanted to laugh, but luckily I didn't, because Judith asked me, really wanting to know, Can you see me married to an Italian barber? (Not being snobbish, but stating the position, so to speak.) 'Well yes,' I said, 'you're the only woman I know who I can see married to an Italian barber.' Because it wouldn't matter who she married, she'd always be her *own person.* 'At any rate, for a time,' I said. At which she said, asperously: 'You can use phrases like for a time in England but not in Italy.' Did you ever see England, at least London, as the home of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

license, liberty and free love? No, neither did I, but of course she's right. Married to Luigi it would be the family, the neighbors, the church and the bambini. All the same she's thinking about it, believe it or not. Here she's quite different, all relaxed and free. She's melting in the attention she gets. The widow mothers her and makes her coffee all the time, and listens to a lot of good advice about how to bring up that nasty brat of hers. Unluckily she doesn't take it. Luigi is crazy for her. At mealtimes she goes to the trattoria in the upper square and all the workmen treat her like a goddess. Well, a film star then. I said to her, you're mad to come home. For one thing her rent is ten bob a week, and you eat pasta and drink red wine till you bust for about one and sixpence. No, she said, it would be nothing but self-indulgence to stay. Why? I said. She said, she's got nothing to stay for. (ho ho.) And besides, she's done her research on the Borghese, though so far she can't see her way to an honest presentation of the facts. What made these people tick? she wants to know. And so she's only staying because of the cat. I forgot to mention the cat. This is a town of cats. The Italians here love their cats. I wanted to feed a stray cat at the table, but the waiter said no; and after lunch, all the waiters came with trays crammed with left-over food and stray cats came from everywhere to eat. And at dark when the tourists go in to feed and the beach is empty—you know how empty and forlorn a beach is at dusk?—well cats appear from everywhere. The beach seems to move, then you see it's cats. They go stalking along the thin inch of grey water at the edge of the sea, shaking their paws crossly at each step, snatching at the dead little fish, and throwing them with their mouths up on to the dry sand. Then they scamper after them. You've never seen such a snarling and fighting. At dawn when the fishing boats come in to the empty beach, the cats are there in dozens. The fishermen throw them bits of fish. The cats snarl and fight over it. Judith gets up early and goes down to watch. Sometimes Luigi goes too, being tolerant.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Because what he really likes is to join the evening promenade with Judith on his arm around and around the square of the upper town. Showing her off. Can you *see* Judith? But she does it. Being tolerant. But she smiles and enjoys the attention she gets, there's no doubt of it.

"She has a cat in her room. It's a kitten really, but it's pregnant. Judith says she can't leave until the kittens are born. The cat is too young to have kittens. Imagine Judith. She sits on her bed in that great stone room, with her bare feet on the stone floor and watches the cat, and tries to work out why a healthy uninhibited Italian cat always fed on the best from the Rosticcheria should be neurotic. Because it is. When it sees Judith watching it gets nervous and starts licking at the roots of its tail. But Judith goes on watching, and says about Italy that the reason why the English love the Italians is because the Italians make the English feel superior. They have no discipline. And that's a despicable reason for one nation to love another. Then she talks about Luigi and says he has no sense of guilt, but a sense of sin; whereas she has no sense of sin but she has guilt. I haven't asked her if this has been an insuperable barrier, because judging from how she looks, it hasn't. She says she would rather have a sense of sin, because sin can be atoned for, and if she understood sin, perhaps she would be more at home with the Renaissance. Luigi is very healthy, she says, and not neurotic. He is a Catholic of course. He doesn't mind that she's an atheist. His mother has explained to him that the English are all pagans, but good people at heart. I suppose he thinks a few smart sessions with the local priest would set Judith on the right path for good and all. Meanwhile the cat walks nervously around the room, stopping to lick, and when it can't stand Judith watching it another second, it rolls over on the floor, with its paws tucked up, and rolls up its eyes, and Judith scratches its lumpy pregnant stomach and tells it to relax. It makes *me* nervous to see her, it's not like her, I don't know why. Then Luigi shouts up from the barber's shop,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

then he comes up and stands at the door laughing, and Judith laughs, and the widow says: Children enjoy yourselves. And off they go, walking down to the town eating ice cream. The cat follows them. It won't let Judith out of its sight, like a dog. When she swims miles out to sea, the cat hides under a beach-hut until she comes back. Then she carries it back up the hill, because that nasty little boy chases it. *Well.* I'm coming home tomorrow thank God, to my dear old Billy, I was mad ever to leave him. There is something about Judith and Italy that has upset me, I don't know what. The point is, what on earth can Judith and Luigi *talk* about? Nothing. How can they? And of course it doesn't matter. So I turn out to be a prude as well. See you next week."

It was my turn for a dose of the sun, so I didn't see Betty. On my way back from Rome I stopped off in Judith's resort and walked up through narrow streets to the upper town, where, in the square with the vine-covered trattoria at the corner, was a house with Rosticcheria written in black paint on a cracked wooden board over a low door. There was a door-curtain of red beads, and flies settled on the beads. I opened the beads with my hands and looked in to a small dark room with a stone counter. Loops of salami hung from metal hooks. A glass bell covered some plates of cooked meats. There were flies on the salami and on the glass bell. A few tins on the wooden shelves, a couple of pale loaves, some wine casks and an open case of sticky pale green grapes covered with fruit flies, seemed to be the only stock. A single wooden table with two chairs stood in a corner, and two workmen sat there, eating lumps of sausage and bread. Through another bead curtain at the back come a short, smoothly fat, slender limbed woman with greying hair. I asked for Miss Castlewell, and her face changed. She said in an offended, offhand way: "Miss Castlewell left last week." She took a white cloth from under the counter, and flicked at the flies on the glass bell. "I'm a friend of hers," I said, and she said "Si," and put her hands

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

palm down on the counter and looked at me, expressionless. The workmen got up, gulped down the last of their wine, nodded and went. She ciao'd them; and looked back at me. Then, since I didn't go, she called "Luigi!" A shout came from the back room, there was a rattle of beads, and in came first a wiry sharp-faced boy, and then Luigi. He was tall, heavy shouldered, and his black rough hair was like a cap, pulled low over his brows. He looked good-natured, but at the moment, uneasy. His sister said something, and he stood beside her, an ally, and confirmed: "Miss Castlewell went away." I was on the point of giving up, when through the bead curtain that screened off a dazzling light eased a thin, tabby cat. It was ugly and it walked uncomfortably, with its back quarters bunched up. The child suddenly let out a "Ssssss" through his teeth, and the cat froze. Luigi said something sharp to the child, and something encouraging to the cat, which sat down, looked straight in front of it, then began frantically licking at its flanks. "Miss Castlewell was offended with us," said Mrs. Rineiri suddenly, and with dignity. "She left early one morning. We did not expect her to go." I said: "Perhaps she had to go home and finish some work."

Mrs. Rineiri shrugged, then sighed. Then she exchanged a hard look with her brother. Clearly the subject had been discussed, and closed for ever.

"I've known Judith a long time," I said, trying to find the right note. "She's a remarkable woman. She's a poet." But there was no response to this at all. Meanwhile the child, with a fixed bared-teeth grin, was staring at the cat, narrowing his eyes. Suddenly he let out another "Sssssss", and added a short high yelp. The cat shot backwards, hit the wall, tried desperately to claw its way up the wall, came to its senses and again sat down and began its urgent, undirected licking at its fur. This time Luigi cuffed the child, who yelped in earnest, and then ran out into the street past the cat. Now that the way was clear the cat shot across the floor, up on to the counter,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and bounded past Luigi's shoulder and straight through the bead curtain into the barber's shop, where it landed with a thud.

"Judith was sorry when she left us," said Mrs. Rineiri uncertainly. "She was crying."

"I'm sure she was."

"And so," said Mrs. Rineiri, with finality, laying her hands down again, and looking past me at the bead curtain. That was the end. Luigi nodded brusquely at me, and went into the back. I said goodbye to Mrs. Rineiri and walked back to the lower town. In the square I saw the child, sitting on the running board of a lorry parked outside the trattoria, drawing in the dust with his bare toes, and directing in front of him a blank, unhappy stare.

I had to go through Florence, so I went to the address Judith had been at. No, Miss Castlewell had not been back. Her papers and books were still here. Would I take them back with me to England? I made a great parcel and brought them back to England.

I telephoned Judith and she said she had already written for the papers to be sent, but it was kind of me to bring them. There had seemed to be no point, she said, in returning to Florence.

"Shall I bring them over?"

"I would be very grateful, of course."

Judith's flat was chilly, and she wore a bunchy sage-green woolen dress. Her hair was still a soft gold helmet, but she looked pale and rather pinched. She stood with her back to a single bar of electric fire—lit because I demanded it—with her legs apart and her arms folded. She contemplated me.

"I went to the Rineiri's house."

"Oh. Did you?"

"They seemed to miss you."

She said nothing.

"I saw the cat too."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Oh. Oh, I suppose you and Betty discussed it?" This was with a small unfriendly smile.

"Well, Judith, you must see we were likely to?"

She gave this her consideration and said: "I don't understand why people discuss other people. Oh—I'm not criticizing you. But I don't see why you are so interested. I don't understand human behavior and I'm not particularly interested."

"I think you should write to the Rineiris."

"I wrote and thanked them, of course."

"I don't mean that."

"You and Betty have worked it out?"

"Yes, we talked about it. We thought we should talk to you, so you should write to the Rineiris."

"Why?"

"For one thing, they are both very fond of you."

"Fond," she said smiling.

"Judith, I've never in my life felt such an atmosphere of being let down."

Judith considered this. "When something happens that shows one there is really a complete gulf in understanding, what is there to say?"

"It could scarcely have been a complete gulf in understanding. I suppose you are going to say we are being interfering?"

Judith showed distaste. "That is a very stupid word. And it's a stupid idea. No one can interfere with me if I don't let them. No, it's that I don't understand people. I don't understand why you or Betty should care. Or why the Rineiri's should, for that matter," she added with the small tight smile.

"Judith!"

"If you've behaved stupidly, there's no point in going on. You put an end to it."

"What happened? Was it the cat?"

"Yes, I suppose so. But it's not important." She looked at me, saw my ironical face, and said: "The cat was too young to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

have kittens. That is all there was to it."

"Have it your way. But that is obviously not all there is to it."

"What upsets me is that I don't understand at all why I was so upset then."

"What happened? Or don't you want to talk about it?"

"I don't give a damn whether I talk about it or not. You really do say the most extraordinary things, you and Betty. If you want to know, I'll tell you, what does it matter?"

"I would like to know, of course."

"Of course!" she said. "In your place I wouldn't care. Well, I think the essence of the thing was that I must have had the wrong attitude to that cat. Cats are supposed to be independent. They are supposed to go off by themselves to have their kittens. This one didn't. It was climbing up on to my bed all one night and crying for attention. I don't like cats on my bed. In the morning I saw she was in pain. I stayed with her all that day. Then Luigi—he's the brother, you know."

"Yes."

"Did Betty mention him? Luigi came up to say it was time I went for a swim. He said the cat should look after itself. I blame myself very much. That's what happens when you submerge yourself in somebody else."

Her look at me was now defiant; and her body showed both defensiveness and aggression. "Yes. Its true. I've always been afraid of it. And in the last few weeks I've behaved badly. It's because I let it happen."

"Well go on."

"I left the cat and swam. It was late, so it was only for a few minutes. When I came out of the sea the cat had followed me and had had a kitten on the beach. That little beast Michele—the son, you know?—Well, he always teased the poor thing, and now he had frightened her off the kitten. It was dead, though. He held it up by the tail and waved it at me as I came out of the sea. I told him to bury it. He scooped two

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

inches of sand away and pushed the kitten in—on the beach, where people are all day. So I buried it properly. He had run off. He was chasing the poor cat. She was terrified and running up the town. I ran too. I caught Michele and I was so angry I hit him. I don't believe in hitting children. I've been feeling beastly about it ever since."

"You were angry."

"It's no excuse. I would never have believed myself capable of hitting a child. I hit him very hard. He went off, crying. The poor cat had got under a big lorry parked in the square. Then she screamed. And then a most remarkable thing happened. She screamed just once, and all at once cats just materialized. One minute there was just one cat, lying under a lorry, and the next, dozens of cats. They sat in a big circle around the lorry, all quite still, and watched my poor cat."

"Rather moving," I said.

"Why?"

"There is no evidence one way or the other," I said in inverted commas, "that the cats were there out of concern for a friend in trouble."

"No," she said energetically. "There isn't. It might have been curiosity. Or anything. How do we know? However, I crawled under the lorry. There were two paws sticking out of the cat's back end. The kitten was the wrong way round. It was stuck. I held the cat down with one hand and I pulled the kitten out with the other." She held out her long white hands. They were still covered with fading scars and scratches. "She bit and yelled, but the kitten was alive. She left the kitten and crawled across the square into the house. Then all the cats got up and walked away. It was the most extraordinary thing I've ever seen. They vanished again. One minute they were all there, and then they had vanished. I went after the cat, with the kitten. Poor little thing, it was covered with dust —being wet, don't you know. The cat was on my bed. There was another kitten coming, but it got stuck too. So when she

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

screamed and screamed I just pulled it out. The kittens began to suck. One kitten was very big. It was a nice fat black kitten. It must have hurt her. But she suddenly bit out—snapped, don't you know, like a reflex action, at the back of the kitten's head. It died, just like that. Extraordinary, isn't it?" she said, blinking hard, her lips quivering. "She was its mother, but she killed it. Then she ran off the bed and went downstairs into the shop under the counter. I called to Luigi. You know, he's Mrs. Rineiri's brother."

"Yes, I know."

"He said, she was too young, and she was badly frightened and very hurt. He took the alive kitten to her but she got up and walked away. She didn't want it. Then Luigi told me not to look. But I followed him. He held the kitten by the tail and he banged it against the wall twice. Then he dropped it into the rubbish heap. He moved aside some rubbish with his toe, and put the kitten there and pushed rubbish over it. Then Luigi said the cat should be destroyed. He said she was badly hurt and it would always hurt her to have kittens."

"He hasn't destroyed her. She's still alive. But it looks to me as if he were right."

"Yes, I expect he was."

"What upset you—that he killed the kitten?"

"Oh no, I expect the cat would if he hadn't. But that isn't the point, is it?"

"What is the point?"

"I don't think I really know." She had been speaking breathlessly, and fast. Now she said slowly: "It's not a question of right or wrong is it? Why should it be? It's a question of what one is. That night Luigi wanted to go promenading with me. For him, that was *that*. Something had to be done, and he'd done it. But I felt ill. He was very nice to me. He's a very good person," she said, defiantly.

"Yes, he looks it."

"That night I couldn't sleep. I was blaming myself. I

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

should never have left the cat to go swimming. Well, and then I decided to leave the next day. And I did. And that's all. The whole thing was a mistake, from start to finish."

"Going to Italy at all?"

"Oh, to go for a holiday would have been all right."

"You've done all that work for nothing? You mean you aren't going to make use of all that research?"

"No. It was a mistake."

"Why don't you leave it a few weeks and see how things are then?"

"Why?"

"You might feel differently about it."

"What an extraordinary thing to say. Why should I? Oh, you mean, time passing, healing wounds—that sort of thing? What an extraordinary idea. It's always seemed to me an extraordinary idea. No, right from the beginning I've felt ill at ease with the whole business, not myself at all."

"Rather irrationally, I should have said."

Judith considered this, very seriously. She frowned while she thought it over. Then she said: "But if one cannot rely on what one feels, what can one rely on?"

"On what one thinks, I should have expected you to say."

"Should you? Why? Really, you people are all very strange. I don't understand you." She turned off the electric fire, and her face closed up. She smiled, friendly and distant and said: "I don't really see any point at all in discussing it."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Victor Brombert

TOWARD A PORTRAIT OF THE FRENCH INTELLECTUAL

L'intellectuel — rarely has a word inspired more fervor, arrogance, bitter irony and generous anger. Edouard Berth, ardent royalist and sympathizer with the *Action Française,* gave vent to some of these violent feelings in a long-forgotten but significant book, *Les Méfaits des intellectuels* (1914), in which he described the intellectuals as an anti-heroic cast of effeminate, knavish and deceitful weaklings, who strive to impose on the modern world nauseating humanitarian ideals and a morality of cowardice. One recognizes echoes of Barrès' vituperations against the servile mandarins, imbued with Kantian moral principles and determined to emasculate France.

Without even mentioning the hysterical polemics of a Berth or the strident outbursts of a Barrès, it is easy to draw up a catalogue of unfavorable opinions. Paul Valéry inveighed with irony against the megalomaniac, complex-ridden intellectuals; Romain Rolland called them "intolerant maniacs" in love with ideas; Péguy denounced the *"parti intellectuel"*; Julien Benda wrote a series of books about the "treason" of the intellectuals. More recently, Raymond Aron diagnosed their addiction to the ideological opium and their supposed irresponsibility in the face of history.

It is clear that intellectuals themselves, when they are not openly hostile to the term and the concept "intellectual," are

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

secretly disturbed by it. Much of the fictional work of Sartre and of Simone de Beauvoir testifies to this uneasiness. Henri Perron and Robert Dubreuilh, in *Les Mandarins,* proudly affirm that they are intellectuals, but deep in their hearts they are assailed by fears that they may have no function whatsoever, that they are merely sterile windbags or—as Scriassine puts it—guilty of a mental and political "masochism" typical of all intellectuals. Perron is fully aware of the pejorative connotations of the word: "I am an intellectual. I am sick and tired that this word has been made an insult." And it is not one of the functions of petulant Ivich, in Sartre's *L'Age de raison,* to exacerbate the scruples, hesitations and guilt feelings of Matthieu Delarue—a function which Nadine, her counterpart in *Les Mandarins,* fulfills with even more gusto by uttering cruel and occasionally even obscene statements about intellectuals.

The term "intellectual" (that is the substantive *"un intellectuel"*) is a fairly recent word in the French language. One would search in vain for it in the Littré dictionary (1863-1877). To be sure, nineteenth-century writers, groping for the word, made use of certain expressions that vaguely corresponded to this idea. Balzac, for instance, in his *Illusions perdues,* calls Michel Chrestien a *"bohémian de l'intelligence."* Yet quite significantly, when the French delegates to the First Congress of the Workers International in Geneva (1866) asked for the exclusion of all delegates who were intellectuals (a Proudhonian attack on the Blanquists), the appropriate term was still wanting: they were forced to use the clumsy expression "workers of the intellect" (*"les ouvriers de la pensée"*). All the socialist literature of the latter part of the nineteenth century bears witness to the absence of the term. There is talk of the *"professionels de l'intelligence,"* of the *"travailleurs de la pensée."* Zola, in 1897, still employs the circumlocution *"professionels de l'intelligence"* and Clémenceau, in his articles for *L'Aurore,* refers to the *"hommes de pur labeur intellectuel."* All tends to prove that by 1895, the term was not yet in common usage.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Else why would Karl Kautsky's pamphlet *De Sozialismus und die Intelligenz* have appeared in "*Le Devenir Social*" (1895), under the title *Le Socialisme et les carrières libérales*? Yet, only a few years later, in the work of Romain Rolland for instance, the term is already familiar. Why the emergence of the term? What occurred in the intervening years?

The answer is spelled out clearly: the Dreyfus case, that "holy hysteria," as Romain Rolland put it. For this ideological war which, eight years after the abortive Boulanger revolution, opposed the two spiritual families of France, was not merely an expression of all the bitterness accumulated since 1789 by a nation with too good a political memory. It marked above all a great moment in the intellectual history of the country, serving as a catalyst for already prevalent tendencies, but also opening a new era which Albert Thibaudet has aptly called the "*République des Professeurs,*" and which, he felt, was brought about by "an insurrection and a victory of intellectuals." The struggle between the two irreconcilable mystiques was probably not followed anywhere with greater intensity than in the little *Librairie Bellais,* the *Revue Blanche,* the editorial rooms of *l'Aurore,* and in the teaching profession (the "*Université*") which, at a time when even Jaurès' Socialist Party was indifferent (or too prudent), constituted the first professional or social group to throw its weight behind the defenders of Dreyfus.

To the intellectual, "the Dreyfus case is the palladium of history," writes Julien Benda, who was himself deeply marked by the crisis (*La Jeunesse d'un clerc*). Thibaudet sums it all up: "This Dreyfus case . . . this tumult of intellectuals . . . " It is indeed impossible to overestimate the significance of the Dreyfus case to the intellectuals, or the importance of the intellectuals' participation in this uproar. It is difficult to think of the French intellectual in historic terms without situating him first in the passionate climate of a crisis which confirmed unequivocally his vocation of moral responsibility. Indeed, all evidence points to the fact that it is during this ideological

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

battle, and more specifically at its moment of highest dramatic intensity (the Esterhazy and Zola trials), that the word *intellectual* is coined and thrown into circulation. Maurice Paléologue, in his recently published *Journal de l'Affaire Dreyfus* (1955), relates an impassioned evening during which a particularly bellicose Brunetière was battling Paul Hervieu, Gustave Larroumet, Victor Brochard and Gabriel Séailles—all of them ardent revisionists. Paléologue records part of Brunetière's tirade (15 January, 1898—exactly two days after the publication of Zola's sensational letter to the President of the Republic):

> As for Mr. Zola, why doesn't he mind his own business? The letter *J'accuse* is a monument of stupidity, presumption and incongruity. The interference of this novelist in a matter of military justice seems to me no less impertinent than, let us say, the intervention of a police captain in a problem of syntax or versification.
>
> As for this petition that is being circulated among the *Intellectuals!* the mere fact that one has recently created this word *Intellectuals* is designate, as though they were an aristocracy, individuals who live in laboratories and libraries, proclaims one of the most ridiculous eccentricities of our time—I mean the pretension of raising writers, scientists, professors and philologists to the rank of supermen. (pp. 90-91)

The faithfulness of Paléologue's transcription cannot be questioned: one need only glance at Brunetière's article in the *Revue des Deux Mondes,* or at his militant public lectures attacking what he termed "the enemies of the French soul," to find the same expressions and the very tone of his harangue in Mme. Aubernon's salon.

Paléologue's talent as a memorialist is, however, not in question here. The real interest of these pages is that they testify to the newness of a word which, significantly, appears in italics in this, as well as in most other texts of the period. Brunetière associates the word with the signers of the petitions being circulated. That very day indeed—on January 15th—a protest

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in favor of a retrial had appeared in *Le Temps* signed by Anatole France, Zola, Emile Duclaux (director of the *Institut*), F. Fénéon (secretary of the *Revue Blanche*), Fernand Gregh, Lugné-Poë, Jacques Bizet, Th. Ruyssen, Daniel Halévy, Gabriel Trarieux, André Baunier, Marcel Proust, Robert de Flers, Victor Bérnard, Lucien Herr, Ferdinand Brunot—and many others. If one follows *Le Temps* throughout these first three months of 1898, one is struck by the frequency with which the word "intellectual" appears. On January 25th, an article entitled "*Le prolétariat intellectuel*" complains of the plethora of useless mandarins threatening the social equilibrium. Only a few days later, Jean Psichari, dean of studies at the *Ecole des Hautes Etudes,* sends an open letter in which he demands the right for "intellectuals" to intervene actively in political matters. Rarely has a group become so vehemently aware of itself.

As for the newness of the word, no doubt can subsist. In a pamphlet entitled *Les étapes d'un intellectuel* (1898), Albert Réville proudly proclaims: "Let us use this word, since it has received high consecrations." Clémenceau, in an article dated January 23rd, in *L'Aurore,* employs the word in italics. On April 5th, Anatole France uses it in an article that appears in *L'Echo,* and which is destined to serve as a starting point for the third conversation of *L'Anneau d'Améthyste.* All the while Maurice Barrès affirms (though with considerable bad faith) that it is Clémenceau who invented the term, and that this "neologism" was very "poor French" indeed.[1] Whatever the exact date of the creation of this word (the Hatzfeld and Darm-

1. *Scènes et doctrines du nationalisme.* With bad faith, for he himself had used the word some ten years earlier in *Sous l'oeil des Barbares* (1888), though in a somewhat different sense. What Barrès disliked by 1898 was obviously not the word, but what it had come to stand for. As for Paul Bourget, he had used the substanive as early as 1882 (*La Nouvelle Revue,* v. 16, pp. 865-895) in his essay on Flaubert whom he described as a victim of the corrosive poison of "Thought." It is interesting to note, however, that in *Le Disciple* (1889) the word appears only twice, each time in a derogatory sense.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

steter dictionary, 1895-1900, is the first, it would seem, to include the substantive), it is evident that the word penetrates into the common language during the winter of 1897-1898. Even in Marxist literature, it is only after this date that one commonly encounters the word in France: the pamphlets by Hubert Lagardelle and Paul Lafargue, respectively entitled *Les Intellectuels devant le socialisme* and *Le socialisme et les intellectuels,* both date from 1900.

Stigma I: Voices without a mandate

But Paléologue's text also tells us much about the affective value, the *color* of the new word. Brunetière pretends to be shocked by the presumptuous interference of Zola. Why doesn't he mind his own business? he asks. The reaction is characteristic, and soon becomes a cliché: here are individuals who should be at work peacefully and modestly in their laboratories and libraries, who suddenly get it into their heads to meddle in affairs totally outside their ken. Brunetière is tireless on the subject. In a resounding article in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* (15 March, 1898), he asseverates that a "first comer" has not the right to insult the French army and French justice, that learned compilers do not know everything, that to have written a treatise on microbiology (an obvious dig at Emile Duclaux) does not entitle one to judge one's fellow men, that scholars are not equipped to understand such "delicate questions" as individual morality and social ethics, and that (the irony is somewhat facile) a professor of Tibetan language may not be the ideal man to govern France. On April 15th, Brunetière is at it again; reviewing Zola's *Paris,* he proposes the following definition of the intellectual: a person who "meddles dogmatically in matters about which he is ignorant." Brunetière is not alone: other voices are heard, and in the same key. "The roster of intellectuals is made up of simpletons," writes Barrès in *Le Journal* (1 February, 1898). And in his *Scènes et doctrines du nationalisme,* after having defined the intellectual as a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cultivated individual without any mandate, but who obstinately wants to impose his chimerical ideas on a concrete reality, he recalls the old proverb: *"A chacun son métier et les moutons seront bien gardés."* A member of the French Academy, Emile Gebhart, congratulating Barrès on his article against the professors, turns out to be even more violent, showering insults on what he calls the "battalion of the discontented": virtuosos of Latin metrics, pale paleographers, embittered metaphysicians, microbe hunters and other abstracters of quintessences.[2] Echoes of these reactions will still be felt a few years later in the novels of Romain Rolland: Jean-Christophe is appalled by the number of *litérateurs* who specialize in politics, form leagues, and sign *petitions*. "I do not trust those who speak of what they don't know," he confides to his friend Olivier (*Le buisson ardent*). As for Daniel Halévy, he will recall long after (*Apologie pour notre passé*) how he and his friends were accused of being nothing but bookwormish intellectuals in rebellion against an entire people.

Stigma II: The death of instinct

"One is always unfair when one attacks professors," Barrès admits with candor in *Mes Cahiers,* though he does not bother to analyze his brand of unfairness. There is of course the age-old suspicion of the thinker and teacher against whom the social group seeks vengeance by means of a caricature based on the conventional and much-belabored contrast between intelligence and knowledge. ("I'd rather be intelligent than an intellectual," proclaims Barrès.) But more significant still, as far as Barrès and his contemporaries are concerned, the last two decades of the nineteenth century witness a real offensive against the "pernicious professor": novels such as Barrès' *Déracinés,* as well as Bourget's *Le Disciple* and *L'Etape* or Unamuno's *Love*

2. See the letter of February 25, 1898, quoted by Barrès in *Mes Cahiers,* II, pp. 3-5.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and Pedagogy all illustrate the thesis that teachers are directly responsible for the actions and even the crimes committed by their disciples. Trends such as these correspond in fact to a general tendency to devaluate pure intellect. Brunetière maintained that intellectual aptitudes had only a relative value, that he, for one, had infinitely more esteem for will power and force of character. Barrès liked to parade his contempt for intelligence as well. Impressed by some remarks made by the physiologist, Jules Soury, he waxed lyrical about the grandeur of "uncultivated life" (he of all people!) and repeated by heart, like a conscientious school boy: "Intelligence! . . . what a tiny thing at the very surface of our personality!" Behind this attempt to discredit the intelligence of the "simian mammal" (a pet expression of Jules Soury), it is easy to detect a reaction against the rationalist tradition with its faith in science and progress, and its intellectual cosmopolitanism. Had not Brunetière, in a much discussed article, announced the bankruptcy of science?

To be sure, it was better to be intelligent than intellectual —but even that was not the ideal. Barrès preferred *"l'inconscient national"* and complained that the nineteenth century (Hugo, Michelet, Taine, Renan) had been entirely mistaken about the importance of Reason. "The individual! his intelligence, his ability to grasp the laws of the universe—it's time to quell these pretensions. We are not the masters of our thoughts. They do not spring from our intelligence. . . ." (*Scènes et doctrines*). This discrediting of intelligence obviously also corresponded to the affirmation of a nationalistic mystique which, in the decades following the defeat of 1870, called the French back to the cult of their ancestors, exploited the primitive allegiance to the "soil," and praised instinctive solidarity with a carnal France. That, unquestionably, is the significance of Barrès pontifical statement that pseudo-culture "destroys instinct." It is of course this very kind of "betrayal" that Benda had in mind when he later denounced the clerics

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for having lent themselves to the intellectual organization of political fanaticism. Ironically enough (though not so ironically for a Benda), a similar devaluation of intelligence and culture can be observed in the socialist literature of the period. Karl Kautsky used to call literary bohemians "vain concocters of projects." Hubert Lagardelle attributed to Greco-Latin education the emergence of a group of dissatisfied, ambitious *déclassés* out of touch with the masses, and considered the humanities useless and perhaps even harmful to modern man.[3]

Stigma III: The hybris of the mandarins

The same passage from Paléologue's diary points to still another sentiment attached to the new word. Brunetière's remark that the "Intellectuals" claim to constitute an aristocracy of supermen clearly echoes a widespread resentment provoked by the supposed arrogance and boundless pride of the "mandarins" (the word is much used at the time), a thoroughly laughable and unjustified arrogance, according to Brunetière and his friends. Paléologue recalls with what suspicion the judges at the Rennes court-martial listened to the testimony of "intellectuals," these "presumptuous pedants who take themselves for the aristocrats of the mind." Similar sounds are heard from all sides: *"caste nobilière," "aristocrates de l'esprit," "aristocratie intellectuelle," "mandarins des lettres," "aristocrates de la pensée," "elite intellectuelle"*—these are the most common derogatory expressions. President Méline's most admired speech was probably the one delivered in the Chamber of Deputies (28 February, 1898) in which he thundered against the *intellectuel élite* with a sarcastic verve that provoked prolonged laughter and unanimous applause. In an article that appears two weeks later, Brunetière repeats that nothing seems to him less bearable than the idea of an intellectual aristocracy.

3. See *Le Socialisme et les carriéres libérales* and *Les Intellectuels devant le socialisme.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In his *"discours de combat,"* he grows even more violent, calling Nietzsche "a professor of Greek, delirious with impotence and pride." As to Barrès, he too, of course, is outraged by these "aristocrats of the mind" who are but "a bunch of people crazy with pride" (*Scènes et doctrines*). Of this supposed arrogance, Paul Bourget had given earlier a famous fictional example in his Robert Greslou, who believes in an oligarchy of scientists, and who dares to think (and to write) that a man such as he must learn "not to consider as a law for us who think what is and must be a law for those who do not think" (*Le Disciple*).

Many of the anti-rationalistic attitudes of the 90's are in conscious rebellion against the thinking of a Renan who, in *L'Avenir de la science,* had more than toyed with the idea of new spiritual guides for humanity. Even before the publication of *L'Avenir de la science,* it is Renan, no doubt, whom Bourget had in mind when, in the preface to *Le Disciple,* he alluded to the all too eloquent master whose paradoxes and intellectualism had charmed, corrupted and spiritually dried up the typical young Frenchman. Brunetière is more blunt in his denunciation of Renan's "odious dream": he shuddered at Renan's future world, controlled by an elite of scientists "placing unlimited terror at the service of truth."

It is true that in some cases the statements and attitudes of certain "intellectuals" semed to justify accusations of arrogance. Zola, during his trial, clumsily answered the judge: "I do not know the law and I do not want to know it." To a somewhat baffled jury he proudly declared that it was he who was the true defender of France, and that his victories would be more meaningful to posterity than those of any general. Even in the calmer atmosphere of his study, he could not refrain from formulating thoughts that exalted the writer over the statesman: "Our lawmakers seem to me inefficient; I would like to see the task entrusted to moralists, writers, poets" (*La Vérité en*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

marche). Opinions such as these seemed to corroborate the worst suspicions of a Brunetière!

Here again it is noteworthy that very similar accusations were fired from the extreme Left as well as from the traditional Right. Proudhon, it is well known, resented all "mandarins." The anarchist ex-nobleman Bakunin tirelessly insisted that it would never be possible to convert to socialism the "aristocrats of the intellect," domineering, caste-conscious and filled with contempt for the working classes. French socialists, at the turn of the century, more than ever before express hostile sentiments. In a lecture delivered to a Parisian student group in 1900, Hubert Lagardelle describes the intellectuals as arrogant and thirsty for power.

Paradoxically—as though it were not enough to be caught in the cross-fire of the extreme Right and the militant Left—the intellectuals find themselves in the ambiguous position of being classified simultaneously as an aristocracy and as a proletariat. As early as 1860, the brothers Goncourt had noted with a measure of bitterness, in *Charles Demailly,* that the new generation of artists and journalists no longer belonged to the comfortable bourgeoisie as did the generation of 1830, but that instead the new *bohème,* whipped on by economic need, lived, worked and "fought for its soup" with "all the hatreds of a proletariat." At the time of the Dreyfus case, a collective pamphlet appears, *Les Prolétaires intellectuels en France* (among the callaborators are Henry Béranger, Paul Pottier and Pierre Marcel). Barrès is also delighted by the expression (which he attributed to Bismarck): an important chapter of his novel *Les Déracinés* is entitled *"Le Prolétariat des bacheliers."*

Aristocrats and proletarians, élite and proletariat—these "accusations" are contradictory only in appearance: according to a Brunetière the intellectuals are precisely a proletariat of *arrivistes* whose totally insane ambition it is to usurp the privileges of an élite. But the importance of such accusations cannot be limited to the intentions of those who formulate

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

them: obviously, it is precisely such judgments which help situate extistentially the intellectual and define him to himself.

Stigma IV: Enemies of the national "soul"

Paléologue's diary mentions one further sin attributed to the "intellectuals." These "aristocrats of the mind" are also accused of having lost their "national mentality"—of having assumed the function of subverters and corroders of patriotic ideals. According to Brunetière, these "enemies of the French soul" (this is the title of one of his many lectures on the subject) are trying desperately to destroy the traditions of France. As for Emile Gebhart's epigrammatic assertion that teachers of German no longer think often enough in French—it may seem tasteless and excessive, but it was certainly not an isolated opinion. Countless are the bitter remarks provoked by the so-called Kantian invasion of French education. Here again, Barrès's reactions are perhaps most characteristic. Of this subversive *Kantisme* Bouteiller, in *Les Déracinés*, is the living symbol: a "modern sorcerer," uprooted and ambitious, who, by means of the intellectual poison he spreads, succeeds in uprooting entire generations of innocent young Frenchmen.

Much of this explosion of chauvinism at the time of the Dreyfus case can be explained by memories of the recent defeat. Dreams of revenge went hand in hand with a hatred for Germany that was further inflamed by unavowed sentiments of inferiority, and by the awareness that France was lagging behind in the Industrial Revolution. Barrès did not have to invent; there were men like Roemerspacher's grandfather who would not hear of any member of his family studying at a German university. It is against this background that the fictional figure of Professor Bouteiller has to be assessed. Barrès's accusations against intellectuals follow a recognizable and symptomatic pattern: men such as Boutteiller "decerebrate" the nation, they ignore the instinctive faith of the masses, they insist on teaching an "absolute truth" instead of teaching piously

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the "French truth" (one can see Benda's grimace of pain!). The intellectual is an "enemy of society" (*Scènes et doctrines*).

"We must watch the Université," writes Barrès in *Mes Cahiers*. "It contributes to the destruction of French principles." Such a warning, coming from a cultured writer, may surprise. Even more surprising, however, is the impassioned battle cry emitted during a talk to a student group: "Will you let us be devoured by these people? Lay your hands on your libraries; to arms, comrades!" That feelings such as these were quite widespread is proven by André Beaunier's satirical novel *Les Dupont-Leterrier* (1900). In order to mock this very brand of militant anti-intellectualism, Beaunier has his Major Joseph say: "The intellectuals! It was already they who betrayed Constantinople to the Greeks—to some dirty little Greeks!" Of course, Beaunier's satire has its limitations: Brunetière, Barrès, Gebhart, Méline and the editorial writers of *Le Temps* have little in common with a Major Joseph. Nevertheless, each in his own way expresses what is at the time a cliché, namely that the "Intellectuals" have all "lost the national mentality."

Needless to add that what to some is scandalously antipatriotic, others interpret as a praiseworthy cosmopolitanism or a generous internationalism. Barrès calls all intellectuals *déracinés* (uprooted). Lucien Herr, in the *Revue Blanche,* rejoins that they are *désintéressés* (selfless). *Déracinés* or *désintéressés,* uprooted or unbiased—the argument implies nothing less than a difference of perspective. To the ones, the intellectual is the sworn enemy of the collective discipline, the enemy of the established social order. (Did not an article in *Le Temps* —14 February, 1898—calmly assert that French intellectuals were discontented trouble makers?) To the others, this supposed subversive force is but the proof of their moral dynamism, of the integrity of their critical stand and of their competence to serve as liaison agents between one culture and another.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A few conclusions and a few ambiguities

Clearly, the word *intellectual* carries, from the moment of its birth, the stigma of derision, contempt, suspicion, and even hatred. Thrown into circulation during the winter 1897-1898, the term implies the intervention in public affairs of supposedly incompetent scholars without a mandate, and suggests a mentality hostile to the mystique of tradition. Intellectuals are held responsible, retrospectively, for all the ills since the French Revolution—and for the worse ills that lie ahead. Hardly a single expression of disparagement or of sarcasm is spared them: envious bookworms, bitter *ratés,* histrionic anarchists, the dregs of society—these are only a few of the colorful expressions used to designate the "impotent" and "cowardly" mandarins! A few nostalgic souls even went so far as to regret the good old days of Sparta when teachers were slaves and kept in a permanent state of inebriety to serve as a lesson to the aristocratic youth.

Occasionally, the "intellectuals" of 1898 themselves display a definite distaste for the term. At the *Revue Blanche*—one of their headquarters—there seems to be some doubt as to whether to rejoice over the appellation. Pierre Guillard, in a pungent reply to one of Brunetière's articles, protests against this "ridiculous title." Léon Blum, reviewing a novel by Paul Adam, establishes an implicit equation between "intellectual" and mental unbalance. As for Zola, he does not hesitate to deride the hairsplitting "silly intellectuals." It is true that Zola especially detested the *Ecole Normale Supérieure* which he sarcastically termed "the school where one knows everything."

But on the whole—and overwhelmingly so—the intellectuals take up the term with pride. Brunetière's accusations do not go unchallenged during that evening in the salon of Mme. Aubernon. Hervieu, Séailles, Larroumet, Brochard—all react with fire, pointing out that it is the intellectuals (they are not ashamed of the word) who today incarnate the true traditions of the French conscience. Elsewhere, Emile Duclaux proudly glories in the very accusation: "Yes indeed, it's the intellectuals

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

who made the French Revolution," adding even more categorically: "I don't know what the choice of my country will be. My choice is made: I remain 'an intellectual'" (*Avant le procès*). This militant pride has many echoes. In a letter to *Le Temps* (3 February, 1898), Jean Psichari proclaims that intellectuals are the glory of a country like France.

A triple ambiguity, however, seems to attach itself to the term from its very inception. (1) The apparently contradictory accusation that intellectuals constitute on the one hand a pitiful proletariat and on the other an arrogant, caste-conscious, self-styled élite. (2) The reactions of the intellectuals themselves who oscillate between a feeling of uneasiness (and even of shame) and the most undisguised pride. (3) The fact that the battle cries and utterances of contempt from the traditionalist and nationalistic Right are echoed (and even reinforced) by other bellicose cries coming from the Left, revolutionary, internationalist and equally hostile. This early awareness on the part of intellectuals of being caught in a cross-fire ushers in one of the most serious predicaments of the twentieth century.

The crystallization of a concept

In spite of new historical contingencies, the word *intellectual* continues, throughout the subsequent fifty years, to bear the traces of its ideological origin. The French concept of the intellectual thus remains bound up with the notion of a social, political and moral crisis. Better still: it implies *the notion of a permanent state of crisis*. Given this state of crisis, the intellectual considers it his obligation to intervene. This sense of moral duty may reach a particularly high pitch during certain periods (1930-1950, for instance)—but it constitutes a permanent trait. Passionately committed to political thinking, haunted by dreams of action, he is, according to Benda, a "traitor" to clerical values (*La Trahison des clerc*). But significantly, even Benda fails to live up to his quasi-monastic ideals: not only does he make specific concessions (such as allowing

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"political speculation," or granting intellectuals the "social mission of truth," or affirming that the "passion for justice" is not a political passion!), but he will quite regularly denounce the traitors of the Right, while tolerating and even admiring the political passion of Leftist intellectuals on the grounds that they, following the dictates of their conscience as true "clercs," protest in the name of justice and out of a pure sense of moral duty. This generous inconsistency in Benda's thinking is symptomatic of a whole climate of ideas.

The intellectual's intervention thus follows a predictable pattern: he considers himself a *voice*. And not merely a voice crying out in protest (Aron calls it the mentality of "permanent opposition"), but a voice that proclaims itself a *conscience*.[4] "To think sincerely, even if it means to think against everybody, still means to think with and for everybody," Romain Rolland was fond of saying. The deep concern here is not with one's private thoughts or suffering, but with the thought and suffering of others, with the need to respond, to declare oneself, to take one's stand whatever the risk—in short, with the impossibility of remaining silent. In his *Apologie pour notre passé*, Daniel Halévy recalls with undisguised emotion that Emile Duclaux was so haunted by the idea of a possible injustice that he literally could not sleep until he had publicly expressed his qualms and so performed what he considered his clear duty. The anecdote is significant: the intellectual's suffering is not a private affair occasioned by some hidden remorse. If he has to speak up, it is because he feels called upon to become the conscience (which often means the guilty conscience) of an entire

4. This has become a cliché. Anatole France, in his panegyric of Emile Zola, called him "a moment of the French conscience." The term is still fashionable. When Camus was awarded the Nobel prize, the *Figaro Littéraire* commented: "The Stockholm Academy undoubtedly wished to honor not merely a writer whom we all admire, but a conscience." Similarly, Mauriac also stated that Camus was "not only a writer, but a conscience."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

group, or even—the ambition is not uncommon—of an entire epoch. Half a century later, in Simone de Beauvoir's *Les Mandarins,* professor Dubreuilh asks himself: "What does it mean, the fact that man never ceases talking about himself? And why is it some men decide to speak in the name of others: in other words, what is an intellectual?" But the very question implies the answer: the intellectual is precisely the one who has decided to speak, and speak up, in the name of humanity. This sense of "global responsibility" is one for which intellectuals have been much criticized. But if it is true, as Raymond Aron suggests in *L'Opium des intellectuels,* that this eagerness to think for all humanity does not go without a measure of pride, it must also be added in all honesty that it marks not only moral courage, but a deep and beautiful yearning to reaffirm man's solidarity with man.

Is there a "race" of intellectuals? Vincent Berger, the hero of Malraux's *Les Noyes de l'Altenburg,* observes, during the symposium which brings together philosophers from various countries, that these faces so diversely and profoundly characteristic of the different nations to which they belong, nevertheless resemble each other. "My father discovered to what extent intellectuals constitute a race." But a "race," needless to say, recognizable through moral rather than physical traits.

What are these traits? One hesitates to undertake this moral portrait. Sensibility modeled on thought; faith in the efficiency of ideas as an organizational force in the tangible world; the utilization of culture as an instrument for criticizing tradition; the unselfish, gratuitious pursuit of truth, but simultaneously the pursuit of a humanitarian ideal; the transmission or preaching of moral values; the sensation, now proud, now humiliating, of existing outside the social framework, and yet, on the whole, an obvious sympathy for the laboring groups of the country and a consequent attraction to Leftist political parties; a feeling of "not belonging" and of impotence; jealousy of the men of action; the cult of revolt, sometimes even of anarchy; the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nearly obsessive fear of being caught on the side of injustice; nostalgia for the masses coupled with the complexes of a "fils de bourgeois" ashamed of belonging to the privileged classes —these constitute only some of the more permanent traits of the French intellectual.

Toward a literary "type"

Our intellectuals and those of 1898 are of one and the same family. Yet it is also evident that they existed *avant la lettre*. The type-intellectual could not possibly have penetrated so fast and so deeply into literature had he not first slowly emerged and become aware of himself as a social reality. The entire nineteenth century groped for the word.

Is Arthur Koestler right in affirming somewhat peremptorily that the Encyclopedists, entering the historical stage as iconoclasts and debunkers, were the first modern intellectuals, (*The Yogi and the Commissar*)? To limit the Encyclopedists' role to that of iconoclasts and debunkers may seem unfair; it fails to account for their sense of mission and their positive idealism. But Koestler is not alone in pointing to the eighteenth-century *philosophes* as the direct ancestors of modern intellectuals. According to Benda, these *philosophes* with a social conscience and socially involved, were the first traitors to the philosophical spirit. Raymond Aron, for reasons that are also not altogether flattering, sees in these eighteenth-century philosophers the first clear example of the intellectual in the modern sense of the word: using their pens for a living, they assume that they have the right to express generously their critical opinions on any subject.

The danger of such digging for ancestors is that it leads to the alluring game of anachronistic generalizations. Yet it is difficult to deny that there exist parallelisms and even family ties. The *philosophes* of the eighteenth century also considered themselves guides of humanity. They too were slandered and sneered at. The word *philosophe* was also discredited. Accused

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of fabricating doctrines to cover their narcissistic arrogance, of undermining the highest virtues (such as love of country), they were said to be a threat to the very existence of society. The *philosophes*—especially at the hour of their triumph—sometimes replied with rather excessive statements. In his *Essai sur les règnes de Claude et de Néron,* Diderot defines the role of the philosopher as follows: "The magistrate dispenses justice; the philosopher teaches the magistrate what is just and unjust." Or, even less modestly: "The philosopher teaches the priest what the gods are." Generally, however, the *philosophes* are more measured in their pronouncements on themselves. In the *Encyclopédie,* for instance: "The philosopher does not consider himself in exile in this world"—a lapidary but moving statement of human solidarity.

Nothing could be more unfair and more unfounded than to view the nineteenth century as the debaser of these ideals. The Encyclopedists did not degenerate into the ludicrous figures of Homais, Bouvard or Pécuchet. Their true heirs are men such as Hugo, Michelet and Renan—and on a humbler level, the underpaid, undernourished, but dedicated country schoolteachers. Prophets and martyrs for the republican mystique, pioneers of the New Regime, these *instituteurs* have shaped generations of French minds, patiently propagating the gospel of progress and civic virtues. Their figure—now already part of a bygone age—has acquired a quasi-mythological stature. "Saints without hope," Brice Parrain calls them in his dense, moving book, *La Mort de Jean Madec.* Charles Péguy was fond of referring to them as "the black hussars of the Republic": one of the *Cahiers de la Quinzaine* he treasured most was that given over to Antonin Lavergne's somber short novel about a pathetic schoolteacher literally asphyxiated by poverty, *Jean Coste.* As for Zola's *Vérite* (a too obvious fictional transcription of the Dreyfus case), it attempted to sum up the virtues of the *instituteur* and raise him to the level of a tragic hero. Dedicated to an apostolate of truth, isolated in his thirst for justice, suffer-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing from all the privations and humiliations of a *déclassé,* Marc Froment is an exalted and frequently naïve portrait of a type that nonetheless did exist in real life.

No less important to literature than the survival of the *esprit encyclopédique* and the emergence of a selflessly devoted body of schoolteachers, is another social phenomenon of far-reaching consequences: the incredible fascination that Paris holds for the young men of the period, the attraction to the metropolis of countless talented and not so talented provincials —in short, the extraordinary intellectual centralization that takes place in the capital. "The French have hoarded all their ideas in one enclosure," complains Paul Valéry's Monsieur Teste, who abhors this paradise of oratory. This centralization is one of the main symptoms of the contagious fever of *arrivisme* racking the young men of the first half of the nineteenth century. This fever spreads through the entire work of Balzac, particularly in *Les Illusions perdues* which describes the flight to Paris of an uprooted generation, losing itself in the sordid mire of journalism, or forming *cénacles* which express the idealism of the epoch. In this urge to conquer Paris, Balzac saw one of the evil results of the Revolution. To some extent, his bitterness can be explained by his own vexatious experiences with the world of Parisian journalism (". . . the journalists in France, the most infamous men I know," he expostulates to Madame Hanska.) Balzac moreover remarked wryly that all sorts of mediocrities were now attracted to literature: "When one does not know how to do anything, one becomes a man with a pen," he writes to Zulma Carraud. But though personal bitterness explains the reaction it does not eliminate the fact that ever increasing numbers of young men of humble birth and without money embark on literary and artistic careers— a phenomenon which can be attributed to political and social changes, the victory of Romanticism, the spread of socialistic ideas, and more generally to the "democratization" of literature.

Many novels since the middle of the nineteenth century—

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and some of the finest—testify to this ferment and describe the formation of these groups which so often meant the death of individual talent, of these bohemian *cénacles* of artists, journalists and failures with their ambitions and illusions: Frédéric Moreau and his friends in *L'Education sentimentale*; the group centering around the journal *"Scandale"* in the Goncourts' *Charles Demailly*; the circle of Coriolis, the self-destructive painter in *Manette Salomon*; the youthful and exalted group of young artists dedicated to beauty and suffering in Zola's *L'Oeuvre*; the utopian members of the "Union Tolstoi" in Bourget's *L'Etape*; the young men from Lorraine, Sturel's uprooted fellow students in Barrès' *Les Déracinés*. Similiar groups of artists and intellectuals continue to people the novels of the twentieth century: the *"groupe des huit"* in Martin du Gard's early novel *Devenir;* the militant Dreyfusard group of the "Semeurs" in *Jean Barois*; the young "Normaliens" of the Rue d'Ulm in Jules Romains' *Hommes de bonne volonté*; the anti-bourgeois in search of revolutionary justifications in Paul Nizan's *Conspiration*; the more amenable young bohemians who gather in the *Cour de Rohan* in André Chamson's *La Neige et la fleur*; the frustrated post-war existentialist intellectuals in Simone de Beauvoir's *Les Mandarins*; the less engaging young intellectuals style-Saint-Germain-des-Près in Jean Louis Curtis' ironic novel, *Les Justes Causes*. These "groups"—their evolution during the last hundred years, the changing problems they face, the light they cast on the intellectual and moral preoccupations of successive generations—deserve a serious study.

Finally, the growing prestige of the Universities, and the emergence (especially during the Third Republic) of a *fonctionnarisme universitaire* holding out the promise of a stable though mediocre career, attracting many young men of modest background, created a social phenomenon with far-reaching consequences. The near-obsessive struggle for a diploma became a recognized malady. A growing army of *licenciés*, frequently frustrated in their ambitions, developed side by side with an

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

equally growing white-collar proletariat, and occasionally merged with it. A bitter Vallès, himself the son of a submissive schoolteacher, has drawn the caricature of these pitiful young men, sons of peasants or petty bureaucrats, who find in the teaching profession a life of humiliations and vexations. Needless to say, Vallès' picture is very one-sided: some of the freest minds of France—a Taine in philosophy, a Jaurès in politics, a Romain Rolland in literature—were the products of this very training. The *Ecole Normale Supérieure,* in particular, played an immensely important role in determining the intellectual life of the country. But Vallès is not the only one to complain: at the turn of the century, somber diagnoses are beginning to come in from all quarters. Serious newspapers such as *Le Temps,* scientists, writers, professors, politicians show concern over the growing army of young men with diplomas. Not only Barrès, according to whom all Frenchmen dream of becoming bureaucrats, but men such as Gabriel Monod repeatedly call attention to the dangerous plethora of university graduates and to the "bureaucratic plague" which saps the energies of the country. "The history of the Third Republic," writes a particularly acid critic, "will be marked by the admittance of all to the liberal professions and by the growth of the army of failures."[5] No wonder Marxist propagandists attempted to exploit this situation, for unquestionably, ever since the middle of the nineteenth century, France had been witnessing a steady proletarization of its intelligentsia—which finally led to syndicalist organizations such as the *Confédération Générale des Travailleurs Intellectuels* and the *Compagnons de l'Intelligence.*

It is, therefore, not surprising that, side by side with the intellectuals' idealism and political involvements, the novel should also have mirrored this social phenomenon. From Vallès' pitiful Vingtras *père* to Sartre's Matthieu Delarue, ashamed

5. Jean Rabain, *"Pourquoi trahissent-ils?", Revue Bleue,* November 1929, pp. 657-660.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(among other things) of his *"vie de fonctionnaire,"* French fiction is peopled with these shabby-looking "professor-types," leading apparently colorless lives: Anatole France's hen-pecked but smiling Bergeret, Bourget's monklike, pernicious Adrien Sixte or his utopian Monneron, Barrès's smug and opportunistic Bouteiller, Malègue's worn out Méridier, Louis Guilloux's clumsy but admirable Cripure, Louis de Villefosse's humble, idealistic profoundly unhappy Adrien Bruneau—all types which seem to lean heavily in the direction of conscious pathos or caricature.

This curious tendency toward caricature is hardly a coincidence: it is probably the most important single key to the emergence of the intellectual as a literary type. For without even insisting on the significance of an anti-intellectual revolt such as the one led in various countries by intellectuals like Unamuno, Péguy or Papini, it is clear that it is the intellectuals themselves who, with a curious lack of solidarity, have in large measure been responsible for this portait of the intellectual. Just as it was the anti-bourgeois son of the bourgeois who invented and exploited the hatred of the philistine in whom he so often still recognized himself, the intellectual, with self-inflicted cruelty, has created in literature the frequently unflattering portrait of the intellectual. The literary climate of the nineteenth century only encouraged such a paradox: with Romanticism man learns to view himself as a "problem," the novelist casts himself as his principal hero, art gradually becomes a meditation on art, and thought the subject of thought. Even a distorting mirror is still a mirror, and, like irony, can be a useful device where there is fear, shame or duplicity. Thus caricature can be ambiguous: the comic figure projected into fiction by the intellectual-novelist may wear another mask, begin to play a more serious role, cease to be awkward or monstrous, and finally be granted the stature and dignity necessary to emerge as the central character in the modern novel of ideas.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Elizabeth Hardwick

THE LIFE AND DEATH OF CARYL CHESSMAN

They rode together in harmony, Abraham and Isaac, until they came to Mount Moriah. But Abraham prepared everything for the sacrifice, calmly and quietly; but when he turned and drew the knife, Isaac saw that his left hand was clenched in despair, that a tremor passed through his body—but Abraham drew the knife. Then they returned again home, and Sarah hastened to meet them, but Isaac had lost his faith. No word of this had ever been spoken in the world, and Isaac never talked to anyone about what he had seen, and Abraham did not suspect that anyone had seen it. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*

The "abominable and voluptuous act known as *reading the paper,*" Proust called it. In a bleary, addicted daze I followed the last years in the life of Caryl Chessman and, with increasing interest—or *consumption,* perhaps one should call the taking in of the flesh and blood of a person through the daily press—his last months. After the shock of his pointless execution, after his exit from the front pages, Chessman still did not entirely remove himself from public contemplation to make room for the young criminals who seemed to spring from the earth just as his bones were lowered into it. Even during the triumphal procession, soon after his death, of Tony and Margaret—the short, little couple, their hands raised as if in a benediction—the ghostly, beaky, droopy, heart-shaped face remained, creating one of those accidental juxtapositions whose significance is everything or nothing.

I wondered how Chessman had appeared in the newspapers during his arrest and trial as "the red light bandit." I went back to the files of the *New York Herald Tribune* and looked up the dates of his tragic history. January 23, 1948, when Chessman was arrested in a stolen car and identified as the man who made assaults on two women—there was nothing in the paper; May

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

18th, 1948, when he was convicted on seventeen of eighteen charges—nothing; June 25, 1948, when he was given two death sentences—no mention of the case; July 3, 1948, when, at the age of 27, he entered Death Row in San Quentin prison—blankness in the *Herald Tribune* on this matter. To the East at least, Chessman had been nonexistent as a criminal, as a case, as a doomed young man. He had to bring himself forth from the void of prison, from nothingness, from nonexistence. This condition of his nothingness, his nonexistence, makes his remarkable articulation, his tireless creation of himself as a fact, his nearly miraculous resurrection or birth—which it was we do not know—a powerfully moving human drama. With extraordinary energy, Chessman made, on the very edge of extinction, one of those startling efforts of personal rehabilitation, salvation of the self. It was this energy that brought him out of darkness to the notice of the Pope, Albert Schweitzer, Mauriac, Dean Pike, Marlon Brando, Steve Allen, rioting students in Lisbon (Lisbon!)—and, perhaps by creating his life, Chessman had to lose it. The vigor of his creation aroused fear, bewilderment, suspicion. In his brilliant accounts of his fellow convicts on Death Row, it is usually the lost, the cringing, the deteriorated who are finally reprieved. A man needs a measure of true life in order to be worth execution.

People on the street, talking about the case, found Chessman's energy, his articulation of his own tragic trap, his stubborn efforts on his own behalf, truly alarming. These efforts were not mitigating; indeed they were condemning. He had trained himself to sleep only a few hours a night so that he could write his books, study law, work on his case. But suppose another condemned man wanted his sleep, couldn't bother to work on his own destiny, hadn't the strength or the talent to bring himself from darkness to light—what then? Lest his very gifts save him, some people wanted him executed in order to show the insignificance of personal vigor before the impersonal law. And, true, his energy is very uncommon among habitual criminals. "Flabby, bald, lobotomized" Lepke; dreamy, paretic gangsters; depressed, deteriorated murderers; goofs putting bombs on planes. Chessman was a young hoodlum who was able, in the last decade of his life, to call upon strange reserves of strength. His early violence and his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

late effort at personal integration seem to have come from the same mysterious source. Life is haunted by one so peculiarly instructive, a history so full of fearful symbolism.

Cell 2455, Death Row, Chessman's autobiography, is a work of genuine and poignant interest. (Its faults as literature are those almost inevitably found in naturalistic first novels by young men who are writing from harsh experience: occasional sentimentality, strained efforts at rhetorical decoration, cultural pretentiousness. Its virtues are of the same genre—power, natural expressiveness, authenticity.) This is an oddly American book. The need to confess violent thoughts is softened by the cream of despairing sentiment, remembered hopes, perfect loves, and the incongruent beauties of the jungle. I had not thought of reading it until after the execution. It had not seemed likely that Chessman would have sufficient objectivity to tell us what we wanted to know about him; or that, if he had the intention to give a serious picture, he would have the words at hand. Almost unwillingly one discovers that he really had, as he said, a great deal to tell. The life of a chronic offender, existence reduced to chaos or ruled by tides of compulsion, reform school, jail, parole, jail once more, and death at the end of it—that history he is abundantly able to record.

The aim of this aching revelation was to save the author from the gas chamber and that it did not do. Its other aim—to picture the life of a young criminal—is accomplished with exceptional truth. Careening cars, gun fights, arrests, escapes, loyalties and betrayals, horror, confusion, defiance, manic decisions, hopeless cruelties: there it is. But it is not a collage. In the center is a person, young, monstrously careless, living in hell, acting out these sordid images and twisted yearnings. Chessman is himself and also a national and international phenomenon of our period. Someone like him will be in the news tomorrow in New York, in Paris, in Moscow. His story has an uncanny application at a hundred points. You never doubt his existence or that of his companions, desperate boys named Tuffy or Skinny, and coarse girls, defiantly self-debasing. These are harsh portraits, very unlike the social worker's case history, the TV delinquents, who cannot avoid a false tidiness and handsomeness as they sweat to render an image not their

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

own. The kindly, manly interviewer, the restless kid, the nagging, hysterical parents—the truth is so much worse than the "problem." We know convicts and condemned men are people, but we are always certain they are not the people in the movies. Their restless, self-devouring emptiness, so like our own, has an unbearably great importance because of their crimes against others and their torture to themselves. Chessman's books, particularly *Cell 2455,* and many passages from his other books about his case, could not possibly be negligent because of the information he was peculiarly able to impart. And beyond that, the fact that he, from whom nothing could have been expected, was able to write them at all is a circumstance of compelling interest. It seems to suggest that only through "art," through some difficult and utterly personal expression is reclamation and prevention possible. This is a world beyond the therapy of the basketball court, the recreation center, the social worker's hopeful sympathy. Its energy alone could only be used up in some violent dedication.

The Story: Chessman's family, his early years, are not what one would expect. He was an only child who loved his parents and was loved by them. Perhaps this love lends itself to interpretation because of his tendency to idealize his parents and his failure to make them real. About his mother: "Hallie was a dreamer, at heart a poetess with both feet firmly planted on the ground and her soft, searching blue eyes in the heavens." In any case, the affection on both sides was real and lasting. Chessman was spared the blight of neglect, abandonment, beatings, drunkenness; his severe delinquency does not easily yield its secret and the family situation is a clue to his strength rather than his weaknesses. His parents urged him to "do the right thing," to return to reform school when he had escaped and so on, but he does not record any pressure more coercive than their mere hopes and pleas. They were feeble trusting people. They believed whatever excuse their son gave for staying out all night and were always surprised and dismayed to learn he had been "getting into trouble." Chessman's schemes, his plans, his hopes, all expressed in the vigorous distortions of his own personality, were of a degree of vitality and daring beyond anything the parents could

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

call upon. They were frail, harmless branches blown about by a genuine tornado. To the tornado, they are the idealized calm, pitiful and innocent. He defends and destroys them at the same time. After he was grown, Chessman learned that his mother was a foundling. She did not know who she was. He set out to find her. With the money he got holding up brothels, he hired a detective to trace his mother's origins. Nothing was discovered.

Early, he contracted bronchial asthma. He was nursed and protected by his parents, but in his own mind the asthma was a profound indication of weakness and shame. "The need to be strong became more demanding with each passing attack." A few years later, an attack of encephalitis left Chessman tone deaf. "The disease ravaged [his] personality as well as his physical self." This was followed by tantrums at school, cruelty, and hatred of himself because of aggressive feelings. His mother was injured in an automobile accident and became permanently paralyzed. Disasters multiplied. All the family resources were spent on the mother's illness. When Chessman was 15, his father attempted suicide, "with a prayer for forgiveness." The family went on the dole. With the humiliation of food packages, Chessman began his criminal activity. He told his credulous parents that he had a paper route and got up early in the morning to rob stores of provisions left outside. The dole, the food packages, the search for new doctors and new operations for the mother, are pretexts for crime; he does not pretend they were more than that.

All pretexts are gradually discarded. Motivation is hidden and justification is not even attempted beyond the hunger of vanity and the compulsion of destructiveness. "He committed nine burglaries, he purchased food with forged personal checks and got, in addition to the food, a dollar or two back in cash." Because of his childhood illnesses and physical weaknesses, Chessman convinced himself that he wouldn't live long and that his thefts and forgeries would be punished by God. His guilt was relieved and, waiting as he was upon his final and eternal judgment, he could hope his parents would not discover his misdeeds. Not long after, he went to a doctor for a simple stomach ache and had his illusion of imminent death destroyed. He was told he was sound and healthy. "These words had an almost paralyzing effect. . . .They meant

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he wouldn't die!" His parents, after all, would have the sorrow of his disgrace. "God had no right to punish his parents for what he had done! Already they had been made to suffer too much. Already they had made too many sacrifices for him. He, alone, deserved punishment." (These are youthful sentiments, recalled later. Chessman died an atheist, rejecting religious rites and burial and saying that for him to call upon God would be hypocrisy. One of his lawyers thought this his worst trait of character.)

It is hard to avoid the thought that Chessman's conscious feelings about his parents masked other feelings of great distress to himself. Shortly after his discovery that he would have to live, he began to risk everything. And the story of his life, at the point of its greatest recklessness and violence, becomes more truthful. Self-knowledge increases, as nostalgia, adolescent emotions, acceptable fears and longings withdraw.

Cars: "That night he stole two cars and committed three burglaries." The young offender's dreams are alive with the embraces of warm, fat, forbidden cars. The car is freedom, power, exhilaration, madness. "Driving was a joyous form of creative expression. Driving made him free. Driving was his personal, triumphant accomplishment." Yet, the pleasure of driving is no greater than the joy in wrecking. ". . . he practiced driving or 'tooling' these hot heaps. He learned to corner, to broadside, to speed and snap-shift them. He purposely rolled and crashed them. He sent them hurtling through traffic at high speeds. He sought out patrol cars and motorcycle cops and taunted them into chasing him, just for the thrill of ditching them, just for the hell of it, and for practice." The car is escape—and capture. No sooner are Chessman, and the other reform boys, out of jail than they are in a stolen car, running through a stop light, alerting the police, who start after them and put them back in jail. The car is not stolen, altered, driven, to provide accommodation for the criminal on the run. It is wrecked just when it would be most useful. It is driven conspicuously, not stealthily.

Capture: Capture is courted with all the passionate energy that just a few weeks previously went into escape. "I stepped into a stolen car the Glendale police had staked out and was promptly arrested by two detectives with drawn guns." Or "I wanted peace

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and I unhesitatingly declared war to find it. I wanted to get even, to have one last defiant fling, and to go out in a blaze of ironically stolen glory." There is no meaning, no purpose, no gain. "Repeatedly we had had it impressed upon us that the road we followed led not to riches but to prison or the grave. Soon we reached the point where we were unable to justify the continuation of our collective effort without frankly admitting that our goal was merely to raise as much violent, dramatic, suicidal hell as possible. . . ."

He was put in reform school, released in April, 1937. He came home to his weak, lenient, kind parents. "The next day he was home and his homecoming was a happy one. . . . Not a word of censure did he hear. His parents' sole concern was for his future and how it could be made a success. And they were immensely pleased at how sturdy and healthy he appeared." Freedom is brief. The need to get back in conflict with the law begins almost at the prison gate, after the handshake with the paroling officer, after the lecture. Paroled in April, in May he had stolen a car and more armed robberies began. All of this culminated years later in his arrest and identification as the "red light bandit," an armed robber who flashed a red light into cars parked on "lover's lanes," robbed the couple, and twice sexually assaulted the women. "After nine years of criminal violence and penal servitude following his release from reform school, he had come to the condemned row at San Quentin prison, twice condemned to death."

San Quentin at last. Prison is a part of the cycle; escape and capture, alternate back and forth, "naturally." Capture is rest from the manic push. The glum, exhausted face of the young outlaw is as revealing as his arrogant, excited mask during the chase. There is no sensible plan, no criminal organization; it is crime and punishment, escape and capture, parole and violation. San Quentin, the ultimate, the final, appears early in this grim dialogue. With Chessman, the exhilaration of violence gives way to extraordinary exertion in handling the fact of imprisonment.

Cruelty and threats have no meaning to men who live by cruelty and threats. They merely provide self-justification. The desire to be strong, not to bend under punishment, keeps criminal defiance alive. "I preferred to stand on my own feet, even if it was in hell." Independence, fearlessness, distorted into horrors, have a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

monstrous power over the convict. Chessman certainly died with "dignity," and that was the best he could do for himself, even if his kind of fearlessness is a tragic example of strength. Even his last words make much of the crippling "courage" he had lived by. "When you read this, they will have killed me. I will have exchanged oblivion for an unprecedented twelve year nightmare. And you will have witnessed the final, lethal, ritualistic act. It is my hope and my belief that you will be able to report that I died with dignity, without animal fear and without bravado. I owe that much to myself."

The woe of his crimes and the waste of his life lay upon Chessman's soul. He feels that society does not understand the young criminal. It is his mission to explain. "It is the story of a grinning, brooding, young criminal psychopath in definitely willing bondage to his psychopathy." The fate is personal, mysterious. "My father had failed to grasp the real reason for my many clashes with authority. He would never understand what drove me. He never would be fully aware of the jungle."

And what drove him? What was the jungle? "I ventured the thought that perhaps after one spends a while in a jungle world he gets so he cannot or does not want to believe there is anything better, or that it is attainable in any case. Maybe hate has a lot to do with it. Hate for everybody, for himself."

"But there are periods of self-doubt when you know yourself for what you really are—an angry, hating, fighting *failure*. Usually then you curse your doubts and blaspheme the imagery [*sic*] of the self you see."

His history is appalling. "Yes, I have been in reform schools, jails, and prisons most of my life. Yes, I had committed many, many crimes and had ample warning of what to expect if I kept on. Yes, I had kept on nevertheless. No, I was not guilty of the crimes for which I was sentenced to death. I was not the red light bandit. . . . Yes, I would say I was not the red light bandit even if I were."

The Thing is describable but inexplicable. "I was one of the trees in this dark and forbidding forest. I knew what it meant to live beyond the reach of other men or God. I had 'proved' everything I had felt the need to prove: that I couldn't be scared

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

or broken or driven to my knees, that I didn't give a damn. But here is where the tragedy lies: this felt need is compulsive and negative only. It is a need to prove one can do without—without love, without faith, without belief, without warmth, without friends, without freedom. This negative need to prove becomes progressively greater and greater . . . the ultimate (conscious or unconscious) need is to prove that one can do without even life itself."

How is society to heal such a desperate sickness? Chessman puts himself in the position of a leper who is also a physician. He studies his own pains and deformations; he does not find the answer. Each offender is different from every other. The salvation of the meanest or the mildest is as complicated and difficult as the life of every non-criminal man. It is tedious, discouraging, even hopeless. Society is too dull, too rigid, too tired to make the effort. We do not even want to reform the criminal because of our anger that we have sometimes tried and failed. Every account of jails, of guards and matrons seems to show that reform is not believed in or encouraged. If a man might be saved by eight hours at the piano, the warden is sure to put him in the jute mill to teach him his lesson. The senseless determination of the prison officials to keep poor Chessman from writing is one of the most depressing and telling aspects of this sad case. One of the wardens at San Quentin, admitting that Chessman was not a difficult disciplinary problem, said, "So far as I'm concerned, our only problems with him have been literary."

The case: There was a large element of the sacrificial in Chessman's execution. Even if he was absolutely guilty, the way of stating the charge and the decision to give the death penalty were severe beyond anything we are accustomed to. Further, the fact that the unusual severity of the sentence, in a case where murder was not involved or kidnapping either, in any sense in which the world understands the term, could not be modified after exhaustive litigation suggests again the sacrificial and symbolic nature of the case. In Mark Davidson's study in *The Californian* he says, ". . .Chessman was not convicted of rape, because in both of the robbery-attack offenses for which he was condemned, the victims persuaded the bandit not to pursue coitus.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The bandit instead had them perform *fellatio*. . . ." It has been widely suggested that Chessman's execution was society's punishment of its own perverse sexual wishes or deeds.

The mystery and force of Chessman's character were probably more outraging than the sordid crime itself. This older juvenile posed the question for which we have no answer. Why had he been a hoodlum at all? His cockiness, his loquaciousness, his cleverness, his energy, his talents only made his life more mysterious and more repulsive. His command of the word repelled the jurors. One of them twelve years later told a reporter that Chessman was just "as vicious as ever." When asked how she could know this, she replied, "After all, I seen his picture in the papers and he still has that same mean look, don't he?" He went on talking, defying, acting as his own lawyer, writing books, trying society's patience more and more. His life represents our defeat, our dread of the clear fact that we do not know how to deal with the senseless violence of the young. It is not too hard to understand organized crime, but how can you understand two young boys who kill an old couple in their candy store for a few dollars? In our rich society, the smallness of the sums for which people are killed shows a contempt for money as well as for human life. The nihilism at the bottom of Chessman's fate, his brains, what the newspapers called his "evil genius," made him a fearful and dreadful example. His cleverness undid him. His fight for his life was stubborn, cocky, pugnacious—and defiant.

In a sacrificial death, the circumstances that the mass fears and dreads and violently condemns may arouse involuntary feelings of wonder and grief in others. There was something almost noble in the steely, unyielding effort Chessman had made to define and save himself. He was a real person. He had breathed life into himself. One could only say that when he died this poor criminal was *at his best*. It was dismal to think his struggle counted for nothing. His ordeal was a tangle of paradoxes. He had spent twelve years in the death house because the law hesitated to deny him every possibility for reversal of the sentence. Those were horrible years, awaiting the answer. Would it have been better if he had been executed six months after his sentence? No, it would not have been better. And yet twelve years are twelve years, a unique

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

suffering that cannot be denied. Somehow a justice complicated enough to delay twelve years to study the "technicalities," should have been complicated enough to refuse death simply because so many delays were legally possible. A part of the protest was a cry against rigidity and against the element of meanness in the law's refusal to place the case in a human context. And there was the *feeling* that Chessman might be innocent.

The claims for innocence: 1. The transcript of the trial was deeply impugned by the death of the court stenographer before he had transcribed more than a third of his private notes. The transcription and the enlargement were done, without Chessman's approval, by a relative of the prosecutor. 2. The description of the red light bandit, given before the arrest, did not entirely fit Chessman. 3. He was identified not in the line-up, but in handcuffs. 4. He had committed a wide variety of crimes, none of them involving attacks on women before this arrest. 5. He said he was innocent of the crimes for which he was sentenced to death.

After Chessman died in the death chamber, Governor Brown said he was sorry he had had no power to stay the execution and claimed he said this even though he was fully satisfied of Chessman's guilt. It was reported he then went for a lonely, sorrowing ride in the country. A detective who worked on Chessman's case and later married one of the victims attended the execution at San Quentin and said, when the death was at last accomplished, "I'm satisfied."

The end was reported with prodigal fullness. As I gluttonously read a dozen newspapers—a dozen newspapers all telling the same story of the gas pellets, the winks, the final lip-read goodbyes, the last struggles of the body—I remembered a hanging that had taken place in my youth. On the morning a Negro was to be hanged in the courthouse yard, other Negroes stayed at home from their work for fear of the way the wind might blow. That same morning a relation of mine went downtown to shop in a department store. The Negro who would ordinarily have been operating the elevator was at home, quietly waiting for the dangerous day to pass. My relation fell down the elevator shaft and suffered ghastly damage to her body and mind.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Francis Golffing

NOTES TOWARDS A UTOPIA

The following thoughts arose largely in connection with a joint attempt of myself and another person to frame, together and separately, by a process of discussion, disagreement-leading-to-partial-or-complete-agreement, separate note-taking and comparing of notes, etc., some basic notions towards a Utopia. Questions are posed very much as they arose in my own thought during a month of intensive exploration, and are dealt with *pro tem,* as one must, at the beginning of such an undertaking, deal with them, since they crowd much too fast to be handled in correct, orderly fashion, and since it seems that each must be treated at once, somehow, to allow the process to sweep forward with momentum. Thus what is primarily involved is a framing of exact questions, with an almost incidental jotting down of answers to be developed later, or perhaps in some cases to be superseded by other answers leading to new questions, or to changes in the original ones. My own excitement in the exploration leads me to hope that these notes may meet an answering excitement in other minds, since signs of preoccupation with the field of utopia are by no means wanting and the encouragement of all serious efforts in the field is, I believe, a great desideratum.

I. *Why Utopias are necessary*

1. Man's life moves in an inexorable cycle of motive and act. This cannot be changed, being part of the human condition. There have been sporadic protests against the cycle—some admirable, others childish, all of them futile. The pedigree of the line of reasoning which advocates the "gratuitous act" as the only way out of this cycle has yet to be established. Its most recent proponents are Rimbaud, Jarry, Gide, the Dadaists. The gratu-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

itous act is anarchic and this gives it an authentic value: the value inherent in all human acts that try to break the chain of necessity. But it can never go beyond a gesture of defiance. Its futility is not due to the intensely personal nature of all anarchic acts; everyone knows that there have been anarchist *movements* which have modified an existing order or helped prepare a new one. It is due to the fallacy that by committing a random act the chain of consequences might be suspended. But the act without motive will still generate its consequence—the only difference being that now the consequence will be even less predictable than is normal. The most a "gratuitous agent" can achieve is to elide motive from each of his successive actions and so create a discontinuous series instead of the usual series, which has the form: motive/act/new motive arising from that act, and so on *ad infinitum*. The fallacy resides in the notion that by eliminating conventional (pragmatic, prudential or simply psychological) motive our chain of actions may be decisively broken. But what is broken is the continuity of the chain, not the chain itself. Viewed from the outside, or in retrospect, a series of abrupt, deliberately mad acts still form a pattern. Yet the real protest of the mind desiring to be free—i.e. unconditioned—is not directed against the motive/act/new motive sequence, though it may think that it is, but against the very notion of consequence in both human thought and human action; against the conditioning principle behind every act of intellection, every *pragma*. That principle is withdrawn from our perception and inaccessible to our will. By acting gratuitously we may achieve a peculiar sense of exhilaration, not available to the man acting from motive. If we keep up the game for any length of time, we shall probably go insane—throw our psychic machinery out of gear. Our effect on the outside world will be one of confusion or mystification, and in most instances this is all the gratuitous agent hopes to achieve. But it seems clear that this is not one of the ways in which a new order can be created.

2. I believe that the chain of motive and consequence should be acceded to by the will, but that in order for it to function significantly it must be translated from the individual realm to the communal. Any true liberation of the individual must come from the group. But the first step must be taken by the individuals, col-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lectively. This too is an experiment, but of a different sort. Our dissatisfaction with the rigidity and barrenness of the motive/act sequence is due, not to any flaw in that sequence itself, but to our sense that both our motives and our acts do not really matter very much, either to ourselves or to others. Since we are not fully convinced of our own motives (or those of our fellow beings) we do not regard our acts (or theirs) as necessary and binding. This, obviously, is not a purely individual problem and so cannot be adjusted through individual counsel or therapy. So long as there is no vision common to all, motive and act will continue not only unproductive but cankered and self-destroying. That which gives the psychic machinery a clear reference will give it, by the same token, self-confidence and a true content.

3. Whenever man realizes—be it dimly or clearly—that his motive/act sequences are sterile, guilt supervenes. No individual today is totally immune from this feeling of guilt. Guilt-feeling is one of the most widely discussed topics in Western society today, but explanations of the phenomenon have been largely obscurantist. It has rarely been taken into account—not even by Freud and his most advanced followers—that the non-specific and universally diffused guilt here in question is the direct outcome of a social malfunction; not in reference to any existing society (as the Neo-Freudians would have us believe) but in reference to a society existing only as *Wunschbild* or Utopia. This is less paradoxical than it sounds. Speaking of Europe only: what sustained earlier societies, founded and operated under the aegis of Christianity, was never any actual fulfillment or achievement but the vision of a society *yet to be*—the millennial hope. In our post-Christian era that same hope has been articulated very clearly and in secular terms by such thinkers as Whitehead, Peirce, Kenneth Burke and the German Ernst Bloch. During the period of transition from the former to the latter phase Feuerbach, Marx and the French Utopian Socialists were its most intelligent spokesmen. Individual schemes have differed greatly and so have the accents—placed now on an explicit social order, now on an "intelligible" order of mind only. But what unites them is more important than what divides them: the fierce vision of man's final *emergence,* mankind's collective self-transcendence. It is this vision

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that has been lost in Western society, and perverted in Eastern, though it still agitates the minds of a few thinkers or, as they are contemptuously called, "dreamers."

But, some readers might ask, why should any individual feel guilty in reference to a yet unrealized social order? Why should whole societies be infected with that guilt? Because all know, or sense dimly, that the present order is ridden with desperate contradictions and, for reasons too numerous to list, unworthy of man; that it is up to all individuals, at every moment of their lives, to work towards a resolution of these contradictions and the establishment, finally, of an order of things which man can confront, if not with pride, at least without blushing. Yet since there is no common vision, the cooperative motive is lacking; and in the absence of cooperative motive our individual motivations are bound to languish: they become capricious, inane, freely interchangeable with one another. It is our putative final move which determines our next, i.e., immediate move: this deep insight of every teleology (and of Pragmatism) has now been largely forgotten. What remains is a nervousness, now fidgety now frantic, about *what to do next,* both on the collective scale and on the petty scale of our personal lives. A cumulative neurotic dissatisfaction suggests to us, after each event, that we should have been up and doing when we were sitting still, and been sitting still when we were up and doing.

This lack of motive, or insufficiency of motive (not to be confused with that *impatience* of motive which gives rise to gratuitous acts) induces guilt as easily, insidiously and deeply as any of the familiar causes of guilt so brilliantly analyzed by Nietzsche and Freud. It certainly is a more powerful "guilt-maker" than either the "wrong" or the "bad" motive, which makes us, respectively, regret or repent what we have done; as all guilt attendant on omission affects us both more profoundly and more obscurely than guilt incurred through commission.

4. To remove this basis of guilt, a mere wish for a better order of things is obviously not sufficient. What is needed are substantive proposals. Of these there have been quite a few in recent decades, ranging from facile, unwarrantable nostrums to brilliant projections of the future society, but in no case, to my knowledge, has

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the subject been attacked radically enough. I should like to point out some of the difficulties inherent in every attempt to sketch a viable scheme of the future. The most serious of these attempts recently (Paul and Percival Goodman *Communitas,* Collingwood *The New Leviathan,* Herbert Marcuse *Eros and Civilization,* Norman O. Brown *Life Against Death*) have followed either the Freudian or the Marxian inspiration—or tried to amalgamate the two. The strongly ideological basis apparent in them—while it by no means detracts from their brilliance, and their often profound originality—nevertheless suggests a central desperate crux facing every writer on the subject. To what extent is the Utopist under an intellectual obligation to found his scheme on antecedent endeavors? Is he really anchoring his vision more securely by quoting authority? Or is such historicism and eclecticism a perversity—plausible but still a perversity—because it flies in the face of the very notion of Utopia? And leaving aside the question of intellectual responsibility and the acknowledgment of debts, how *necessary,* from a pragmatic point of view, is this kind of anchorage?

I believe that it is not only unethical but altogether impossible to bypass the great ideological systems of the recent past. The use of antecedents is discretionary with each Utopist, so long as he remains alert to the danger of a) overbalancing his scheme with previous evidence and suggestions and b) lamely synthesizing, or redacting, notions that reveal their full significance only in the context of the system from which they derive. Neither of these faults has been entirely avoided even by the writers I have named. The main reason for this seems to have been psychological, rather than methodological or pragmatic. To write a Utopia is today, more than ever, a task requiring extraordinary temerity and, in the eyes of both the scholarly and the lay public, an eccentric, almost absurd undertaking. Small wonder, then, that Utopists (who in most instances are scholars as well) feel compelled to give their treatises every appearance of solidity in order to obviate the charge—always ready to hand—of charlatanism. Even in those instances where past systems are creatively criticized with a view to future realizations—not merely brought in as alibis—the writer is liable to an involuntary displacement of focus

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

from future to past, a deflection of the original "futuristic" impetus. As a result, no complete image, or no image endowed with the necessary physical and operational features, of the desirable order emerges at the end of most treatises. It is both the prerogative and the limitation of ideology that all it can breed is fresh ideologies. But while the architecture of ideas is surely of the essence, it is still not sufficient to create the kind of assent by which a Utopia will stand or, in the absence of such assent, fall.

Closely connected with this difficulty is the therapeutic tenor almost invariably found in the schemes of the eclectic and scholarly Utopist. The emphasis is too much on what is wrong with the present (and past), not enough on what shall be right in the future. My own notion of Utopia is that it should be not so much a therapy as a diagnosis: the diagnosis of a state of affairs the outlines of which we can only dimly discern, but discern all the same. Our main effort, then, should be one of clarification and forestallment, rather than of critique, recommendation or cure.

In this respect (and only in this respect) it seems to me that the mock Utopias of writers like Orwell and Huxley are sounder, that is to say, more in keeping with the fundamental intention of the Utopian concern, than their affirmative analogues. By placing before the reader an absurd and dreadful but, unfortunately, *possible* state of affairs these writers are exercising the central diagnostic function of "true" Utopism, only in reverse. They present what must not be, even as the affirmative Utopist presents what, ultimately, must be. And as our own age recognizes itself in their schemes under the mode of caricature, so it should recognize itself in the affirmative Utopias under the mode of consummation, transcendence.

5. I am convinced that most Utopian proposals today, and for some time past, have been rendered ineffective by the use of unanalyzed relations. The basic constituents of any society—past, actual or Utopian—have to be reconsidered, i.e., dialectically re-ordered, if a new social constellation is sought that would, finally, do justice to man and his world. Recent Utopists have shirked this task, either by not inquiring into these basic relations at all—taking them over, that is, ready-made from some existing system of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thought—or by stating it as their conviction that basic relations are invariable (though everything else should, and must, change).

The basic relations of a society have to do with man both as subject and object (to himself as well as others); with man's attitude towards the physical and symbolic, i.e. intangible objects he produces; with the meaning to him of the images he creates, the discourse he constructs—and here another realm of "subject" comes into view, for it is no mere accident of language that we speak of the subject of a painting, or a sentence, or a poem. That entire cluster of subject/object relations has to be radically reinvestigated by anyone wishing to adumbrate a new scheme of collective living, for it is precisely in this area that our own societies exhibit a maximum of confusion, misconception and self-deception.

A suggestive outline might be the following:

The individual

1. considers itself the center of human activities.

2. engages in a number of activities, in the widest sense, radiating out from it onto the circumference of what (again in the widest sense) is the world of objects. (This includes the mirror relation between the self as subject and the self as object of contemplation, like, dislike, etc., with solipsism and narcissism as the extreme developments of this.)

3. A rough division of such activities into five areas: subject/artifact; subject/symbolic object (institutions, ideas, etc.); subject/self (as his own object); subject/other subject (as object); subject/natural object.

4. In each of the five cases there is action *and* re-action, though in different degrees of intensity. I should surmise that other individuals act back upon us more strongly than lifeless objects or ideas, and that the action/reaction relation between the self as viewer and the self as viewed is quite as intense as that between myself and other "selves." But this would have to be fully examined.

The main question is to what extent these processes should (and can) be changed in Utopia, my assumption being that "all is not well" with the present pattern. The terms do not matter: these particular terms have seemed to me personally to afford

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the best method for explaining the whole complex of multiple relationships. There is the possibility, for example, that responses to natural objects might become less (or vastly more) important in Utopia than those we make to man-made objects. Our reactions to "symbolic" objects (e.g. the Community, the Economic System) might become more affirmative than they are now, since the individual would no longer feel that it has to protect itself constantly against the "institutional" world. The mirror relations of "self-consciousness"—always fraught with great dangers to the psychic equilibrium—might become harmless, because we would not care any longer (or not care as much) about what other individuals (or institutions) think of us as individuals. This implies that also our interpersonal relations would have lost much of their present tenseness and ambivalence—all energies would supposedly be directed towards the commonweal, and it is through *this* that we would gain our principal personal satisfactions, etc.

Utopists casting about for "directive" antecedents would be well advised to pay somewhat more attention to Hegel, Kierkegaard, Husserl, Sartre, and somewhat less to Marx, Freud, and their respective affiliates, since it is among the former group that we find men's basic relations to one another, to themselves, and to their products most fully discussed. It is surely no slight to either Marx or Freud to state that their efforts, while truly radical in their way, did not address these fundamental topics; or when they did address them, would do so from a rather special point of view and with different developments in mind. The basic relations whose examinations we urge fall properly within the province of the philosopher. Now neither Marx nor Freud was, or considered himself, a philosopher in this primary sense. Marx brilliantly illuminated the relations of the manual and intellectual worker to their products, as well as the relations, under a Capitalist system, of groups and persons toward each other. He then contrasted these relations, which he viewed not only as repressive but as demeaning to all the parties involved, with their purified equivalents in the classless society of the future. Freud, on his part, showed little interest in the relation between the individual and what he *makes* (as distinguished from what he does, rejects, or becomes attached to) and a somewhat greater but rather specialized interest

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in the relations between individual and group on the one hand and between different groups coexisting within the same social body on the other. His insights into the nature of interpersonal relations were of course quite extraordinary—as keen, in their own way, as those of Marx, which they complement; and in his perception of man's relation to his body (that body seen not only as the seat of the nervous system but also of concept-formation and what is traditionally called *soul*) he is without a rival. If this account, for all its sketchiness, is basically accurate, certain observations suggest themselves which bear directly on our topic. Neither Marx nor Freud (nor, for that matter, any of their followers) viewed man in his total complexity, that is to say as a being doubly bounded: first and foremost by his own body; more remotely but quite as importantly, by his social ambience. This double bound creates, motivationally, a double determination whose intricate and usually contradictory workings need to be illuminated; but illuminated at the root, not—in the manner of the Neo-Freudians and other schools of psychology-cum-sociology—at the top.

Two points should be made clear in this connection. First, I do not mean to place the onus for the mentioned omission on Freud, or Marx, or any other original investigator of the human condition. Freud and Marx both fully knew what they were doing and what they have done is, in all essentials, beyond cavil. But it is for our present purpose—the construction of a Utopia—at once too much and too little. Too much, because many of their ideas are not relevant to such a scheme or because some of their assumptions, as well as the conclusions drawn from these assumptions, are too doubtful to be incorporated. Too little, because neither thinker felt called upon to deal fully with every aspect of the basic subject/object dialectic. Attempts made by writers such as Brown and Marcuse to fit together Freudian and Marxian notions, in the manner of a jigsaw puzzle, have led to somewhat awkward results: you don't arrive at a complete picture of man, or society, by this sort of dovetailing; would not arrive at it even if Freud furnished all the answers withheld by Marx, and vice versa, which unfortunately does not happen to be the case.

My second point should forestall the objection that in urg-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing a strictly philosophical starting-point I am apriorist, i.e. close my eyes to the conditions of the actual world and man's role in it. My answer to such a charge would be that there is no necessary connection between these two propositions. I would go even further and maintain that without a clarification of basic principles no effective hold on the empirical world is possible. Even the most bigoted empiricist cannot dispense with first principles, no matter how carefully he tries to hide them; and to the extent that he uses them he, too, is a philosopher. Preaching a new ideology is one thing; setting forth basic ideas which are then applied to the actual present, the possible future, quite another. Since, moreover, it will be my main business to show how these basic ideas undergo drastic changes under the pressure of reality, and engage in constantly new relationships, the above objection cannot seriously be sustained.

Our culture is fed up with subjectivity and objectivity both. But the fault lies not with these concepts but rather with its own naive impatience in applying them during the last century and a half. The basic distinction, made very clear by both Hegel and Marx, is not between "self" and "other" but between two separate yet correlative dimensions which have to be treated dialectically, not statically. The world of "objects" (both persons and things) must be seen for what it is, potentially or actually, viz. capable of reacting back upon us, and in this act assuming the status of subjects even as we, under that same perspective, temporarily forego our subject status and become objects. These same dimensions subsist within one and the same individual (the individual as "viewer-subject" and as "viewed-object"), and will subsist in harmony unless the individual is disturbed. In a society like ours no harmonious relationship is possible between the self and the objects of this world or, by the same token, between the self as subject and the self as its own object. Yet such a relationship is an ineradicable wish, in everyone. This is why Utopias become necessary.

II. *The reversal of imagination*

There is no evidence among animals in their natural habitat of "repression"—the other face of "sublimation"—but only of a)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

instinctual conflict, which is resolved intra-instinctually, without benefit—or "malefit"—of a superego; and b) instinctual frustration through aim-inhibition. We do not know enough about the adjustment mechanism through which the animal comes to terms with such frustration, but there is no evidence that would suggest a process resembling Freudian repression.

Superego formation is dependent on symbolization, symbolization on the capacity for language (cf. Kenneth Burke, Suzanne Langer). Quite early in man's evolutionary history the logic of concept formation and the logic of instinct begin to bifurcate sharply. Once rational schemes for living are entertained, certain curbs on the individual instincts—there is no such thing as a "gregarious instinct"—are bound to ensue. Libidinal gratification is seen at many points to be at variance with the dictates of reason, on which any form of conscious sociality, incorporation, is predicated. The seeds of superego formation—and of sublimation—are present in the earliest forms of human society, and develop henceforward at a rate of acceleration proportional to the mounting complexity of social compacts.

I hold that the view which would see man as a divided being (i.e. necessarily, biologically divided) is false; it receives no support whatever from modern ethological research. That view is nothing other than a secularization (unacknowledged, for the most part) of the various creation myths which postulate a man originally perfect and then suddenly fallen from biological perfection (usually identified with a state of supernatural grace). Reason is seen in most of these myths as evil, the cause of man's fall; but a closer reading suggests that man's libido structure bears equal responsibility with his reason for his undoing, in the form of unrestrained appetency. Man, then, is damned from the beginning, on two counts: being "neither beast nor angel" he has to carry the weight of his double nature (tantamount to a double guilt) through history, without remission except for the possibility of supernatural redemption.

What has given rise to these "origin myths," which are in such striking accord with each other? Primitive man felt most sharply his separateness from, rather than his continuity with, the animal kingdom. Yet, being so different from animals, why did he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

still share so many animal traits? Why did he lust, procreate, die like an animal? All of pre-Darwinian man was haunted by these queries, and much of our post-Darwinian anguish is still caused by them. Although the answers to these questions have taken various and sometimes opposite forms, they have all been made in terms of the same original shock or wonder: why, being so different from the beasts, aren't we *radically* different? Given this false starting point, this primitive logic of inquiry, made inevitable by man's early pride in his specific difference (his language and reason, enabling him to project symbols) it was equally inevitable that he should seek the answer to the desperate question in his own mythic past. Thus there arose the concept of a lost perfection, together with the correlative concept of a perfect creator who saw fit, at some mythic point in the past, to make man in his image; then, at some later point in that mythic progression, to divest him of this perfection in punishment for a dreadful crime.

Human history has been one long attempt to atone for a criminal act which, though perfectly imaginable, never took place —except in the human psyche, where it has wrought the appropriate anguish hereditary to this day. The final triumph of Darwinism has not succeeded in erasing man's sense of a primal guilt—not because we don't fully believe in the theory of evolution, but because a drastic conditioning that has continued for several millennia is not likely to be overcome in a mere century. Even though today must of us are consciously concerned with closing the gap between man and animal, the inherited impulses all point the other way—towards widening it even further, no longer by becoming god-like but by becoming gods ourselves, *secular* gods. Our present choice is precise but difficult. It is the choice between continuing the logic of history, which is also a logic of instincts, and a resolute about-face that would be both instinctual and conceptual —but primarily conceptual. Man's perfection, that is to say, has to be placed where it belongs: in the future; and it has to be seen for what it potentially is and actually might be: not absolute perfection but relative perfection, bounded by man's possibilities as a biological species.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Kingsley Widmer

THE ACADEMIC COMEDY

A decade ago, an intelligently disenchanted young critic, John W. Aldridge, wrote in *After the Lost Generation*:

If we take . . . his [the writer's] subject matter to be the fund of values, attitudes, customs, and beliefs which he shares with his audience and in terms of which he discovers what he has to say . . . then it becomes clear that the events of the last fifty years . . . have dangerously narrowed the areas of subject matter available to writers and, consequently, crippled their means of discovering themselves and their age.

As if to prove the crippling inability to adventure into a more open world, Aldridge has now written an academic novel. It is academic not only in subject and scene, and not only in stylistic abstractness and derivative technique, but also in the *mea culpa* of the narrating *persona,* who got all his experience "not from life, or any speculations upon life, but from the reading of books," and who ends, a portentous Gatsby of the American literary life, "baffled to the end, watching over nothing."

The real flesh of the academic novel, badly shriveled by Aldridge in his moralistic critic's frying pan, derives almost always from an intellectual archetype: the ugly dialectician, the parasitic philosopher-poet at the gentleman's banquet, the vice-ridden master, the learned unsavory monk, the Socrates-Falstaff-ghetto-intellectual. With all his personal grossness and labyrinthine wit, this ugly-wise one appears as both the idol and the outcast of the genteel academy, the topsy-turvy king of polite cultivation. In *The Party at Cranton,** an enigmatic master of this type provides the focus for the novel and its academic literary party. Buchanan,

* David McKay Co. $3.50.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fantastically brilliant and savagely grotesque editor of an academic little magazine, was, supposedly, once a Southern poet; now, however, devoted to imperious criticism and to the small-time calculations of institutional power, he represents "the new *ersatz* accolade of literary success," academic appointment, which replaced the disreputable but authentic independence of the "old style literary life." But Aldridge's concern for the significance of this intellectual history becomes confused as a result of his narrator's despairing inability to do anything except equivocate about King Critic. Since the fiction has no dialogue, no other point of view than the first person narrator, in short, no other reality than the narrator's constant equivocation, the novel itself becomes one elaborate equivocation. Is King Critic an impotent sadist of letters? Or is he the victim of recent intellectual history, whose "being" consists of parodying himself in the "monstrous self-perpetuated hoax" of academic literary life? For Aldridge's narrating *persona* the question cannot be answered. Everything must remain unknowable, each sense riddled with academic doubt, and therefore, "all life . . . is cliché."

Such clichés spiral down amidst the usual scenery of literary academic life: the nastily decorous party with its verbal castrations, the predatory academic wives, the literature-hating ambitious young teacher-critics and the sycophantish, insular young teacher-poets who populate fashionable English departments. Also appearing, though rather less probable, is a topsy-turvy queen of learning, a sexually insatiable lady classicist whose bruised breast, displayed at the party, ponderously focuses the moral uncertainty about King Critic: Did he do it in sadism or passion? The answer, which Aldridge elaborately treats as unknowable, seems so obvious that his perplexity about it may embarrass the reader. Aldridge also weaves in the more amusing confrontations of a semi-male and a semi-female academic novelist—an identifiable pair of wittily malicious sentimentalists—and so continues a recent tradition of academic in-fighting in the academic novel about academic novelists. His essayistic aperçus dressed up with elaborate symbolism, culminate in the final scene in which Buchanan reasserts himself as the mystifying king of literary academe, and dances

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

off (with a young instructor's wife, a frigid nymph) into a garbage-laden river.

Nevertheless, the nuclear experience of *Party at Cranton* does not reveal itself primarily in the guilty disillusionment with academic literary politics which Aldridge makes so much of, nor in the tired critical profundities with which he splays his ruminations, but in the more obscure and poignant master-pupil agon. Aldridge shies away from exploring this directly and fully; perhaps he is self-conscious about writing a professorial literary critic's satire of a professorial literary critic for professorial literary critics. As such, it deserves Aldridge's own, earlier, comment on the peculiarity of academic literature "in which more ideas are conceived than are ever put to use, more passions are analyzed than are ever felt." And the manner fits the substance. These confessional charades suffer from an overwhelming neo-Jamesian ratiocination: "That, at any rate, was how [he] saw [him] then, or, more precisely, how he saw, or imagined he saw, other people see him. No one, of course, ever saw. . . ." However subtle James is at his best, his abstracting manner, as repeated imitations force us to realize, developed an eccentric refinement of the novel, and weakened the novel's major strength: the presentation of life in all its irregularity and vitality. Aldridge also displays the essentially academic style in passages of poetic and historical-literary parody. The outskirts of that upper-middle-class wasteland, says the narrator, remind him of Fitzgerald's "valley of ashes"; and for that cry about immersing oneself in "the destructive element" of modern unsavory suburban-academic life, in case you've forgotten, "Conrad's Stein had been the original author. . . ." Pedagogic, too, is the novel's wayward history of the Fugitives-and-successors in American literature (a long digression providing a synthetic background for King Critic). Aldridge busies himself at under-cutting the "Southern School"; but this, like most of the intellectual content of academic novels, assumes the reader to be the victim of the fashionably provincial and to have over-valued small but academically powerful coteries.

Perhaps the Jamesian abstractions, the pseudo-history of the Southern School, the stock allusions, the skittishly self-conscious reflections, the academic suburban party, the comfortably agonized

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

literary narrator—perhaps all, willy nilly, become parody. But to have the academic parody of literature remain literature requires a more decisive belief in some fuller non-academic reality. The novel as successful parody of the novel also requires a defter sleight-of-hand at Chinese box tricks than Aldridge can command, especially when heavily gloved as perplexed moralist of the literary-intellectual life.

In parodying himself Aldridge poses for us the larger question of the reason for such novels. They seem to arise out of an odd process of self-justification by self-condemnation: once this was the grandiloquent theme of Hamlet-Faust-Karamazov: now it has become symptomatic rather than symbolic. There is, indeed, a kind of teaspooned Dostoevskyeanism much favored by novelists within the academy. (A recent example, placed in an academic scene: Monroe Engel's *The Visions of Nicholas Solon* (1959), a murky study of intellectual masochism amid the loss of intellectual community and purpose. The scene of the intellectual's involuted unfolding of his self-hatred need not, however, be academic, and is not in the old bohemianism of Albert Guerard's *The Bystander* (1959), a small and neat study by an academician of the writer as man-of-resentment, placed in Europe.) The academic motives of obscure revenge for intellectual emasculation and labyrinthine perplexities over the loss of literary innocence need not be reduced to matters of the novelist's biography. The retaliatory aspects of the *roman à clef* lack relevance. Malicious biography is widespread in the novel—in almost every work, for example, of Joyce and Lawrence, in the current fictions of a well-known neo-naturalist who can't stop elaborating vindictive portraits of his ex-wife, and in the self-indulgent cult biographies of beatniks. Biography in the novel deserves only passing interest, and in the academic novel should appeal only to wives and job-hunters.

We forget, in these over-subtle days, the dependence of fiction upon social fact. The novel of academic life threatens to become yet another of those self-perpetuating sub-genres of the American narrative in search of significant society. Understandably, for those older sub-genres once rooted in regional realities—the Southern novel, the Western tale, the Midwestern Small-Town-Story—churn on only at sub-literary levels of counterfeit nostalgia. The

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

academic novel reveals marked similarities to certain recent subgenres of institutional portraiture about the military, Hollywood, advertising, and similar technological bureaucracies. No doubt the fixed order of a battalion, a studio, an office or a college tends to provide some sense of definition in an amorphous mass society and pluralistic culture where any distinctive rhythm of life and heroic code exist mostly by their absence.

The longing for unlimited power, says Aldridge of his slightly fictional university, replaced all heroism. So, also, with those other semi-intellectual institutions concerned with advertising, research and public display, where an insecurely prestigious and uncertainly diffused power dominates. In fact, almost all academic novels are concerned with power, and rarely with ideas, forms of sensibility, or explorations of new experience. Though usually literary in their *dramatis personae* and manners, academic fictions remain political in point. That the game is played and paid for with intellectual currency changes nothing, except perhaps the authenticity of felt thought, which in any case is now used only to qualify status, production, place and the rest of the shifting power situation. Passionate intellect in recent decades has become increasingly greyed, though less because of some change in the nature of intellect than as a result of the needless use of intellect in all its forms for institutional protective coloration.

Some treatments of academic power approach it pietistically, as in Carlos Baker's decorous moral fantasy, *A Friend in Power* (1958), in which the slightly literary professor ascends to the presidency of an Eastern university by being only modestly dishonest, trivially scrupulous, and nearly totally imperceptive. With even more ponderous moralism, Theodore Morrison described the same process of academic power as a justification of the "higher middle class" in *The Stones of the House* (1953). Such fictions, as we can see in conjunction with their betters (the basically similar but tougher-minded analysis of bureaucracy of C. P. Snow's *The Masters,* or, going back in time, certain nineteenth-century portraits of the clergyman in the Establishment), perform an old and somewhat tedious function in the Anglo-American novel: to document social realities while providing a genteel audience with moral edification. The never-questioned aura of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

respectability and ultimate worth that is ascribed to the academy, as in traditional fiction's treatment of marriage, really depends on covert obscenity—the obscenity of covert sex in the sentimental marriage novel becomes the obscenity of covert power in the sentimental academic novel. A law of the academic novel (to paraphrase Lawrence on obscenity) is that where educational ideals are most emphatically asserted, intellectual corruption is most advanced.

In partial contrast, Stringfellow Barr's more perceptive comic melodrama in *Purely Academic* (1958) of a social scientist's savage in-fighting to achieve a university presidency titillates us with direct appeals to sex and power. But Barr, too, manages to stay within the bounds of genteel edification; by an educationist's didactically quick reversal, marriage and the magical toga of academic idealism undercut the cynical treatment of a middling Midwestern university. As with almost any other aspect of the American experience, disenchanted dialectics run aground on the undeniable (even if intermittent) presence of ease, affability and openness. The American academy is not nearly so good as it is supposed to be, but also not nearly so bad as it might well be.

When reduced in proportion, the question of power becomes the lowly professor's cringing, farcical or crafty struggle for tenure, a subject treated mawkishly in Mary Jane Ward's *The Professor's Umbrella* (1947), wittily in Mary McCarthy's *Groves of Academe* (1952), with rococo pathos in Vladimir Nabokov's *Pnin* (1956), and with cornball clichés in Mark Harris's *Wake Up, Stupid* (1959). Add to this a third academic political theme, the novels turning sententiously about the "subversive" issue, from James Linn's *Winds Over the Campus* (1936) through May Sarton's *Faithful Are the Wounds* (1955). "Academic freedom"—more freedom of the academy from the wrong sort of politics than freedom of the intelligence turned critically on styles of life, sex or teaching—comes out as one of the few "ideas" in the academic novel.

Now the game of power, appropriate as it is to academic life, shows marked relevance to literary criticism. It is not incidental that academic novels and stories largely come from those who are known primarily and essentially as critics (Randall Jarrell, William Van O'Connor, Theodore Morrison, Carlos Baker, Lionel Trilling, Mary McCarthy, Robie Macauley, Leslie Fiedler, Stringfel-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

low Barr and John Aldridge, among others). Modern literary criticism runs with literature but hunts with the methodologies (social, psychological, theological, scholastic); consequently it aspires to imaginative works but calculates increasingly (as Aldridge insists) on reputation, foundation suitability, departmental production, and other forms of academic rationalization. The criticism written, and dramatized in academic novels, against criticism by critics (like that cruder sort done by beatniks, and weekly reviewers) shapes up as a critique (frequently confused) of prevailing power and, probably, a demand for counterpower. The attacks on literary criticism don't stop at the demolition of the analytic pedagogy which has become the new pedantry, but extend against all polemical, discursive, philosophical criticism: against the whole tradition of literary intelligence. Furthermore, much of the force of modern literature, directed against a hyper-rationalized society, and, indeed, much of the specific burden of the best criticism, defends "irrational" modalities of knowing and being. Hence the defensive or remorseful tales written by the literary critic about the institutionalization and rationalization of literature and criticism in the academy. They never had it so good and that, quite rightly, is bad. For better and worse, our forms of sensibility have long required heterodoxy, contrariety, even perversity, and the critics know it well.

Intellectuals in the academy, that is those whose primary identity does *not* derive from technical scholarship, pedagogy, gentlemanly *noblesse* (a nearly dead tradition), or bureaucratic ambition, lack justification in the current schemes of pedagogy, research, and civil ideals. There now avails no real academic justification for peculiar and intense kinds of sensibilities and speculative and critical minds. That intellectuals should exist simply by and for their own values and purposes is, and probably will always remain, formally incomprehensible and generally repugnant to the academy. It is true, however, that intellectuals have spawned their own critical and discursive "disciplines" in self-justification, especially in the social sciences and literary criticism. Restricted by the nets of academic power-rationalizations, these disguised speculations and explorations become largely dull

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and contradictory: social-moral polemics masked as science, *belles lettres* and literature pretending to be pedagogy.

Become defensive, the nicer literary critics may turn, like William Van O'Connor in *Campus Across the River* (1960), to earnest stories of didactic pathos. Become self-righteous, the literateur points to the other academician as the villain, as in George P. Elliott's fatuous academic novel, *Parktilden Village* (1958), in which the anti-hero is equally an expert at sociological questionnaires, comic strips, and at seducing simultaneously a mother and daughter because a sociological relativist without an old-fashioned conscience. Such high moral seriousness, always sentimental in disposition and imitative in literary manner, is academic in the fullest sense.

So far, nothing has been said about the usual approach to academic novels as comedies. There are two ways for professors, and their novels, to be funny: one is to tell academic jokes; the other is just to be themselves. We will leave aside the jokes, many of which turn out to be ornate and increasingly improbable versions of the traditional unworldiness of the academician, or satiric thrusts which, like almost all modern satire, require special knowledge (the quirks of a certain type of New England college, the asexual eroticism of upper-bohemia, the obscure name-dropping of New Critics, the anti-intellectualism of the more elegant or *New Yorkerish* learning, the mixed stupidity and esotericism of scientists, etc.). In the genteel academic comedy of manners a few academic jokes slip in, but in large part the humor is unintentional. When the professor in Baker's *A Friend in Power* briefly agonizes whether he should finish his fine book on Voltaire or become a university president, we don't sigh with him and his author over the loss to scholarship; we laugh, with Voltaire. In larger perspective, we don't laugh with the comedy of manners, which provides the form for such fictions, but at its imitation, as well as at its irrelevance to what once was called the life of the mind. A comedy of manners requires roots in an heroic style, such as that of the seventeenth-century French courtier, the eighteenth-century English gentleman, or the later cosmopolitan dandy. The American academy, like other contemporary bureaucracies, can no longer claim such roots, and thus no such style. Schoolteachers playing at

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the grand manner deserve laughter, both as characters and authors.

Comedy, the usual argument goes, ends by resolving its dilemmas in some affirmation of the social and moral order. Most academic comedies, however, covertly express escalator anxiety: they suggest that one must go all the way *up* to the presidency *or out* into the cold, cold world. One recurrent kind of affirmative escape might be called the rich-uncle-fadeout, in which a secular deity pays off the discrepancies and rewards the grubby hero for his institutional pathos. In that bland farce set in a class society, Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim,* the bemused satire of a provincial English university ends with the young instructor disgraced but hired as a secretary by a wealthy man. A cruder farce set in a mass society, Barr's *Purely Academic,* ends with the aging professor disgusted but hired as an administrator by a wealthy foundation. Logically enough, Amis achieves more style than Barr.

American fantasies rely upon yet another escape route. In Helen Howe's *We Happy Few* (1943) the heroine enlisted easy patriotism to flee into the American heartland, away from the cultish ethic of Ivy League academe. In a number of other academic novels, which may be decently represented by Gerald Brace's Gothic romance, *The Spire* (1951), flight from the corruption of the eastern liberal arts college ends in Academic Siberia, an obscure college in the virile West. And since Mary McCarthy's heroines always discover themselves by saying goodby (to Utopia, to Bohemia, or to whatever past they can dredge up), the lady writer of *Groves of Academe* rather earnestly rejects the progressive foolishness of the more arty liberal college. Randall Jarrell, in his wry *Pictures From An Institution* (1954), can only finesse around the same farewell by employing the sentimental malice of suddenly finding profundity in acknowledged foolishness. Except for administrative candidates, the emphatically repeated moral appears to be that individual fulfillment and academic life run contrary, and the more prestigious the school the more firmly pathetic the truism. The primal sin for the literary intellectual in the academy is not his presence but his allegiance. Whether it be in relation to a college or a department, a pedagogical or a critical doctrine, he has fallen among thieves when institutional identification takes the place of intellectual identity.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Many academic novels also point toward some yearned-for real world outside, toward that predictable interlude in the town, nature (preferably of the robust hunting-and-fishing variety), or non-academic society. Why the school of technology in the West, or a weekend in the woods or the big city, should provide a fuller sense of the genuine, at first appears puzzling. Academic characters, scenes and emasculations seem in themselves no more abstract or fantastic than their counterparts in other institutional fictions. But then, one recalls that novels about advertising, Hollywood, the military and other sub-cultures similarly in search of a society also end uncertain about the real and authentic. A generation ago, Willa Cather, in *The Professor's House* (1925), prepared her sensitive professor-hero's withdrawal by demonstrating that intellectual life had imitated the world of commerce; in Aldridge's *The Party at Cranton* the very lack of withdrawal is prepared for by demonstrating that the world at large has come to imitate what now passes for intellectual life, gone academic.

But let us by all means end positively, since the academic novel, in its several senses, may be with us for some time. To do so we must, like Santayana discussing the philosophical poets, praise the true work foreshadowed but not quite yet written. Hints of the intellectual rogue in the academy, and fragments of absurd adventures beyond mere imagining, swell out of a number of academic novels. Admittedly, the sly, sentimental, refined, moralistic professorial writers will have difficulty recognizing the topsy-turvy intellectual king amidst all the anxious grubbiness and institutional gentility. But the open world of the intellectual picaresque, which our better writers have been finding in what remains of non-academic society, allows a possibility for those maintaining contumacious and vital attitudes in an increasingly pedantical universe.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THEATER CHRONICLE

AN UNUSUAL PLAY

Lionel Abel's *The Pretender* (The Cherry Lane Theater) cannot be an easy play for the ordinary New York theatergoer to assimilate. It does not fall into any category that he can readily identify. One might call it a dreadful comedy! It combines a certain ironic lightness with dissonant notes which inspire fear. A Parisian audience accustomed by now to the theater of Giraudoux and Sartre—not to say Ionesco and Genet —would feel more at home with such a mixture.

The ingredients are American. The play deals with nothing less than the negro "question." The story is that of an important negro novelist who has gone to live in the deep South because this section of the country, he believes, retains some vestiges of aristocracy now entirely absent elsewhere in the country.

It so happens, however, that one night his wife, on her way to the post office, is molested by a local fanatic who, in retaliation for a crime recently alleged to have been committed by a negro, has sworn to attack any colored person who ventures out after dark. The novelist's wife suffers little more than a bruise and a rough kiss, but for an entirely feminine reason—she believes her husband too complacently sure and somewhat cold in his treatment of her—she leads him to believe that she has been raped.

The husband, in what appears to be a demonically deliberate calculation, plans to avenge the disgrace by arranging to lynch the offending white man. He (the husband) calls the leading negro citizen of the community—one who has made himself responsible for the protection of negro rights—together with several strong-armed neighbors to assist him in carrying out his plan. When the novelist's wife fails to dissuade her husband from engaging in this insane enterprise, she leaves their house with the threat that she

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

will give herself to the white man who assaulted her so that he can no longer be accused of having committed rape.

To the three men who have been summoned for the lynching, the novelist (whose name is *Prince*) first proposes his plan—at which they are of course outraged—and then informs them that his proposal has been rendered futile since his wife has gone to the white man's home and presumably to his bed. The negro leader is now even more indignant. If the wife had actually been raped what a blow might have been struck—through litigation and the attendant publicity—in the cause of negro "emancipation."

At first Prince maintains that, logically, true freedom for the negro demands that the black man be considered no more out of order for indulging in acts of terror than is the white man when he permits himself such an act. A negro and an "aristocrat," as Prince fancies himself, also has his honor which may call for vengeance.

In the last act when the wife returns and reveals that she never was raped in the first instance and never went back to the white man's place, there ensues what might be called a philosophical show-down. Prince asserts that he and the people of his race are not much better than the inferiors they are vulgarly accused of being, since he has not been allowed—even by way of argument—to avail himself of direct action for the same reasons which other men often invoke to justify their irrational behavior. All Prince's interlocutors—including his wife—call Prince a pretender, a sham. No one convinces him of this, for he has a sophisticated rejoinder to every point made against him. He *is* a pretender, he says, in the sense of a plaintiff, a claimant, a rebel. Against the sloppy *laissez-faire* of our epoch (in which no one pretends to anything because no one believes in anything) he insists on living by a code—even if it be one as ancient as that of the Spanish nobility of the sixteenth century. He has no respect, furthermore, for the kind of liberty or equality which merely permits the negro to enter the same restaurant or the same school as the white man. True equality will come only when the black man will be indistinguishable in the night while the white man stands out as a remarkably contradictory phenomenon: in other

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

words, when the question of color as such as reduced to absurdity.

This paradox—eschewing all sociological rationalization of an immediately practical nature—not only gives a clue to the special literary nature of Abel's play—but also to some of its general import. Abel is not only saying in effect "I don't care if my sister does marry a negro," but "I want to be as free to dislike the black as much as I do the white!" and in proclaiming this, he throws off the incubus of any paltry "liberalism."

Just as this attitude will strike many of us as monstrous extravagance or as sheer frivolity, so the play itself, with its constant twists and spurts of sharp action and peculiar motivation hardly complies with any ordinarily recognizable pattern of drama. For Prince possesses aspects both of Molière's *Misanthrope* and of a Gidean or Sartrian "existential" character given to gratuitous acts which exemplify attitudes outside the range of normal debate.

Yet the play pretends at all times to stay within the realm of the naturalistic. Thus a confusion is created in the mind of the simple American spectator who judges everything by the convention of stage realism—unless he is specifically cautioned that what he is seeing is a "dream," a "fantasy," vaudeville or some form of theater that isn't obliged to be "true to life."

The Pretender is an intellectual comedy on a subject about which it is usually considered bad taste to joke. What is worse from the standpoint of the casual theatergoer, one is not always sure how seriously Abel means us to take his joke. Is the play a parable? Does Abel intend his weird fable to be regarded as a sober statement? Does he really propose to remain detached from concrete social considerations, to revel in the position of the anarchist-bohemian-poet? How far is *The Pretender* a pretense?

The consternation which must accompany such queries makes the play fascinating and refreshing to me. Its construction is muddled only if we are foolish enough to take the play literally —though there is a very bad moment at the end of the first scene of the third act when Abel turns inappropriately "psychological" and has Prince treat his wife like a whore because she has wantonly toyed with his sensibilities and behaved like one.

The play is brightly written in polished prose somewhat more

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

formal than stage dialogue is expected to be, but then, it cannot be overemphasized, we are not dealing here with drawing-room material. The play is in the precise sense of the term a *jeu d'esprit*: mental in inspiration and almost abstract in content. This is so rare in the American theater as to constitute not only a virtue but a pleasure.

The stage director's task here is to draw a fine line between realism and stylization. If he stylizes over much, the audience may regard the play as an arty trifle. If he leans toward a matter-of-fact presentation, the spectator is prone to refuse any involvement on the grounds that the story is too far-fetched to be credible.

It seems to me that Herbert Machiz very nearly succeeded in finding the right key. Part of his difficulty lay in the fact that the cast, while individually capable in a technical sense and for the most part personally arresting, was not sufficiently experienced in speaking the play's special sort of dialogue with all the necessary *manner*—ease, clarity and authority—demanded. But, on the whole, considering the problem, the result was distinctly praiseworthy.

Harold Clurman

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

John Henry Raleigh

SEX, SOCIOLOGY AND CRITICISM

This is an interesting book,* and in many ways it is a good one. It is ambitious and large in scope, attempting to draw historical lines from *Clarissa* to *Marjorie Morningstar,* from Charles Brockden Brown to William Faulkner. It is international in scope and sees the American novel not in a vacuum but in its European context. It attempts to tell the reader something not only about the American novel but about American culture as well. It is enthusiastic about its own theme and is replete with sentences, usually at the end of chapters, or at the end of sections of chapters, ending in triumphant exclamation points. And, strangely enough, it is dogged as well: on and on for almost six hundred pages, as inexorable as a glacier. Finally it attempts to explain an important and complex problem: why the gothic ambiguities of so many American novels, wherein heterosexual love is absent, and terror, necrophilia, loneliness, perversion, incest, murder, death, suicide, homosexuality (usually "innocent," whatever that may mean, says Mr. Fiedler), fantasy, pursuit, and flight are the subjects, and the blackness of night and the whiteness of the charnel house provide the background. Mr. Fiedler's thesis is well known. The American novel represents a "retreat to nature and to childhood." It evidences "an obsession with violence and [an] embarrassment before love. . . ." It is a "gothic fiction, nonrealistic and negative, sadist and melodramatic—;" ". . . ours is a literature of horror for boys." Mr. Fiedler's explanation for this is biographical and cultural. Many American novelists have had ambiguous or troubled sex lives; thus, so the argument runs, their novels are unconscious fantasies of their own neuroses. Further-

* *Love and Death in the American Novel.* By Leslie A. Fiedler. Criterion. $8.50.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

more, they lived in a Puritanical culture which likewise imposed its distortions. Much of what Mr. Fiedler has to say on this score is true and much of his argument is convincing. But like all such theses—a single explanation for a complex phenomenon—it is not the whole truth, nor is it without its own distortions within its own domain. For better or worse—shades of Parrington!—we have now our first full-scale psycho-sexual interpretation of the American novel. In fact the very subject matter of the *Main Currents* disappears into the libidinous depths of Mr. Fiedler's interpretation of Freud, for, so says Mr. Fiedler, the literature of social protest arises from the frustrations of the thwarted libido: ". . . the unemployed libido enjoys marching on the picket lines." It's altogether a stimulating book—not because you necessarily agree with it, and I disagree with much of it—because it sets the reader to thinking about all these matters. It is also an irritating book, as I guess its author intended it to be, although I think he often annoys the reader in ways other than he intended. For while he intends to shock by his "fearless" treatment of what, I gather, he thinks is still forbidden material—and much of the book has the flavor of a Mencken diatribe written in the 1920's, saying, in effect, "I'll force you timid, conventional, stupid *bourgeois* cowards to face the horrible truth at last"—in actuality he annoys by the simplicity and by the frequent unfairness of his argument.

Against the argument I would have three objections: it is either careless of or willfully misconstrues facts; it is given to glittering, plausible, but finally vague generalizations; and it is monistic, reductivist, and over-simplified in its explanations. I have a fourth and more general objection to the book as a representative of a habit of critical "thought," although it is, I think, the best of a poor lot.

Facts do not mean much to Mr. Fiedler; I think he is rather proud of his escape from and emancipated attitude toward this tedious realm, although he is quite willing to use, without acknowledgment, the facts that some "harmless drudge" (my quotes, not his) has laboriously gathered. He knows, for example, that before 1830 one-third of all our novels were written by women and within that third were to be found almost all the early best sellers, and he uses this "fact" as an integral part of his argument. With other

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

facts he is often either careless or distorts things in the interest of his argument. For example, American males—all of them in literature and, by strong implication, in life—refuse, according to Mr. Fiedler, "genital maturity." This impotency links such disparities as Strether of *The Ambassadors* and the American cowboy of Zane Grey: "Not for nothing do the Riders of the Purple Sage ride off into the sunset leaving the girls they rescued behind; they have been postulated as virile without sexuality. . . ." In actual fact Zane Grey's *Riders of the Purple Sage* (1912) ends with one pair of lovers, and one of them is female, riding off together to settle down on a farm and the principal pair of lovers, another female here, lock themselves in a valley, high in the mountains. Unless Lassiter, the hero, is a human fly and can scale sheer walls, there is no escape for him from THE FEMALE. This is a small matter, and I know the ending of *Riders of the Purple Sage* only because it was a favorite boyhood book, but it is symptomatic, for Mr. Fiedler also plays fast and loose with quite well-known facts, either conveniently forgetting them or distorting them in some way.

In fact the argument of the book is in great part a kind of "heads-I-win, tails-you-lose" affair which the author plays simultaneously with his subject and the reader. As for his subject, he is dealing with two things: author's lives and author's books. The jugular vein of an author, according to Mr. Fiedler, is an ambiguous sex life, and most of the major American novelists are sitting ducks for this line of argument, although it should be added that many European writers would be, too, and that we don't know all the facts about any of them. The one novelist he discusses at length who does not fall into the category of "non-genitality" is Cooper, obviously happily and successfully married. "Placid" is the word that Mr. Fiedler uses. But no, Cooper cannot win either; he is a slave to the whims of his wife and daughters. He moved nearer to New York at their behest although later on it is admitted that he also wanted to be nearer to his publishers. I'll leave aside the question of whether one's masculinity is compromised by doing something for one's wife and daughters and only remark that Mr. Fiedler will not allow any exceptions to his generalizations, no matter what the facts.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The game with the novels is more complicated. Mr. Fiedler is always trying to link things together, and I think this synthesizing effort is admirable, but he is always damaging his argument by brushing aside any harsh facts that get in the way. Strether, of *The Ambassadors,* is called an "aging, virginal hero (we are told he has been married before, has a son, but we do not believe it, scarcely remember it) . . . ." Similarly, although he cannot really get around this one, it is argued, ambiguously, that somehow in *The Scarlet Letter* there was not really any sexual intercourse between Dimmesdale and Hester: "It is finally hard for us to believe *on a literal level* in the original adultery . . . just as it is easier to imagine Pearl plucked from a rosebush than carried for nine months within her mother." You might as well argue that Edmund in *King Lear* was not a bastard because Shakespeare did not show us Gloucester copulating with his (Edmund's, lest I be misunderstood) mother. Or the services of the argument are furthered by taking something out of context. Thus Maggie Verver of *The Golden Bowl* is—*must be*—linked to Hawthorne's Hilda because early in the novel James describes her as one who "wasn't born to know evil," "must never know it." But this destroys the whole point of *The Golden Bowl* which is that Maggie does learn of evil. Furthermore that evil of which she learns is an adulterous relationship between her husband and a woman who is married to her father and is supposedly her best friend. Surely this is all "genital" enough, but, no, Mr. Fiedler would say, "we" do not believe in the sex life of any of these characters. Or the meaning of a whole novel is forcibly distorted. Thus *Huckleberry Finn* is a "terrible" book. But it is "terrible" mainly because Mr. Fiedler's thesis is that the major strain in the American fiction tradition is the gothic, and *Huckleberry Finn* is, in Mr. Fiedler's mind, the greatest American novel: ergo *Huckleberry Finn* has to be gothic. To accomplish this revision of the novel, he has to set aside its center of gravity, the rather bland consciousness of Huck, and enumerate all the peoples and events of the novel that should have made it gothic: the drunkard father, the feud, the murder of Boggs, and so on. But all these horrors are finally dissolved into the unfailing good will and equanimity of the protagonist. So the final effect of the novel is not like *Moby Dick* or *The Scarlet*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Letter as Mr. Fiedler would have us believe; it's like *Huckleberry Finn,* in all its wonderful uniqueness. Now as between the English attitude toward *Huckleberry Finn*—they publish it as a Puffin Book—and the emergent American one which sees the novel as the Koran, the Book of the Dead, *The Castle,* and the Sermon on the Mount all rolled into one, it is difficult to chose. To one like myself who thinks it a delightful book, with a fully serious meaning, this dichotomy offers no fair choice. Mr. Fiedler finally does admit, at the very end of his book, that *Huckleberry Finn* is "funny" and "joyous." But it shouldn't be because it is gothic. Mr. Fiedler explains this disparity by saying it is a "riddle," and the book is full of "ambiguity" and "deep-doubleness." All this is another part of his central thesis, for the great American authors are "duplicitous": Mark Twain then must also be "duplicitous."

Since it is the fashion these days always to bring one's own children into the argument, I'll bring in mine. I recently read to them *Huckleberry Finn.* They thought it was interesting and funny. They liked Huck and Jim and didn't like Pap although he caused no nightmares. They thought the Duke and the Dauphin were riotous. They'd love to sail down a river on a raft although they can see it has its dangers. (I haven't told them yet that the river is SYMBOLICAL—they think it is only flowing water.) They were bored by the end. "And a little child shall lead them."

Spinoza said that everything in the universe is like and unlike everything else, and Mr. Fiedler is all on the first proposition of the truism. "When Huck Finn cries out, 'All right I'll *go* to Hell,' and Ahab, 'From hell's heart I stab at thee!'; when Hester Prynne tears off her scarlet letter, they are Faustian heroes; but so too (in all modesty and moral elegance) is Henry James's Strether when he rejects Mrs. Newsome and Maria Gostrey alike, refuses all rewards from life; and so, too, is Hawthorne when confiding to a friend, after the composition of *The Scarlet Letter,* that he had written a 'hell-fired book.' " This is interpreting the Faust legend so broadly as to make it meaningless. "Aging, virginal" Strether a Faust? The only one who really fits the generalization is Ahab, and what does it mean to say that he does? He is also Prometheus, the Byronic hero, Satan, among other things. Jamming in *Huckleberry Finn* is again an injustice to the novel. In the first place

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Huck is thoroughly secular in outlook and does not believe in Hell. In the second place when Mark Twain had him make the Faustian bargain, he was indulging in some fairly obvious but also quite effective irony. The point, as I understand it, is that all of Huck's instincts are for Jim as a human being. But so strong was the Southern ethos about slavery that even this outcast and emancipated boy could never completely shake it. So he says to himself, after having decided to continue to help Jim to escape: "All right I'll go to Hell!" But he neither believes in Hell nor that he is going to go there if he helps Jim. In short, in most of Mr. Fiedler's generalizations, suggestive as they are, the ironies and the individuality of the novels themselves disappear.

Mr. Fiedler's over-all thesis suffers from the same rigid and inflexible application, and everything is reduced to thwarted sexuality. Out go ideas, ideals, literary conventions, historical periods, publishing conditions, and so on. Futhermore, the notions about sexual relations in nineteenth-century society are naive. In the first place, nineteenth-century reticence in print about these matters was often just that: verbal reticence. But to listen to Mr. Fiedler, one wonders how we all got here. I have in my mind an imaginary meeting between Mr. Fiedler and a great, bearded Mormon elder, surrounded by his many wives, his scores of children, his dozens of grandchildren, his army of great-grandchildren, a swarming mass of humanity all emanating from this patriarch. Then Mr. Fiedler enters, declaring: ". . . genitality itself had withered in America." Or I should like to introduce him to Harold Frederic in his days in England where he kept two establishments: one for his wife and child and another for his mistress and his children by her, or to the innumerable and eminently respectable business men who divided their time between their wives and children and their current mistresses. All I am trying to say is that what people *do* and what people *say* in the matter of sexual relations may be two different things, especially in the nineteenth century. While it is true that New England Puritanism was a considerable force in American culture, let us not forget that it produced not only the Strethers, it also produced the characters of *Desire Under the Elms.*

I think, however, that Mr. Fiedler's book is most interesting as

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

an example of a popular habit of thought in recent literary criticism. What it really represents is a simplification of late nineteenth-century or early twentieth-century European ideas. In his Preface Mr. Fiedler ennumerates his masters: C. S. Lewis (in the *Allegory of Love*), Marx, Freud, (plus a tincture of Jung), and D. H. Lawrence. But the influence of the first three is really nominal. As for C. S. Lewis, there is an interesting but historically dubious discussion of Courtly Love in the early part of Mr. Fiedler's book. (Mr. Fiedler admits that he borrows freely and transmutes easily the ideas of any of these people). What comes from Lewis, who was studying an allegorical literature, is Mr. Fiedler's habit of allegorizing a non-allegorical literature. In Mr. Fiedler's mind no character in a novel stands by himself; he always points to something else, either sexual, sociological, or mythical. Clarissa and Lovelace are "male principle and the female, savior and devil, aristocracy and bourgeoisie, but they are also the head and the heart—what we would now call super-ego and (in somewhat expurgated form) id." Similarly, history becomes the evolution of literary archetypes; thus Lovelace finally becomes converted into "the masturbatory fantasy figure of bourgeois ladies."

The influences of Freud and Marx seem only of the vaguest order. As far as I can see, Freud means terminology, principally "id," "ego," and "super-ego," which are used very loosely and with none of the sense of their provisional character and their complexity as in Freud himself who kept changing his mind about the meaning of each term and was always tentative in his use of them. All that is left of Marx is a few references to "class," but this gets confused with the "brow" game that Mr. Fiedler plays. And this compounds confusion more. In the first place Marx's "class" was an economic designation and was based upon a class system which generally prevailed in Europe in the nineteenth century. It does not exist in that form in Europe any more and never existed, in Marx's sense, in this country, which has been largely middle class, with an upper stratum that was a plutocracy rather than an aristocracy and a lower stratum that was poor and oppressed but was not a proletariat in the European sense. In F. Scott Fitzgerald's words: "Americans, while willing, even eager, to be serfs, have always been obstinate about being peasantry." The "brow" designation, while

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

partially economic, is primarily intellectual-esthetic. It was first used in a very suggestive and stimulating fashion by the early Van Wyck Brooks who said that American culture was divided into high-brow and low-brow. But since then a "middle-brow" has been added, and then variations on that—"upper-middle," "lower-middle," and so on, endlessly fluid. Added to this, more recently, has come a "U"-"Non-U" or "In"-"Out" game which is played with these phantom counters and which itself is always changing. Thus just when the "middle-brow" gets enough money to visit a psychiatrist, so that he can have this badge of distinction, he finds that psychiatry is "Out." Critics like Mr. Fiedler use the phantom counters as a kind of blunderbuss to demolish anything they do not like. The logic here is simple: if you can pigeon-hole anything, it is done for. Cozzens and Salinger are "upper-middle-brow"; Kerouac is "bohemian-*kitsch*"; Shirley Jackson is "middle-brow." But live people, flesh and blood, cannot escape Mr. Fiedler's Procrustean bed, and we are told that "the fear of the Jewish intellectual as seducer . . . troubles the sleep of lower-middle-brow Anglo-Saxon maidens. . . ." Now all of this is a far cry from Marx; in fact it sounds like Russell Lynes.

The real influence here is Lawrence's *Studies in Classic American Literature;* in fact Mr. Fiedler's entire book was predicated by one sentence of Lawrence in his essay on *The Scarlet Letter*: "You *must* look through the surface of American art, and see the inner diabolism of the symbolic meaning." Lawrence's book is a brilliant one, certainly one of the most suggestive ever written on the subject. It is also erratic, repetitious, and often downright wrong, as any such prophetic book must be. In any event it is *sui generis,* the product of a unique mind whose utterances were always an expression of that uniqueness. To attempt to move your standing-point to his is an impossibility. We forgive his fury, his lapses of taste, his stupidities because the glow of his genius enfolds them all. Furthermore, we know that what he had to say was completely original: he read, and spoke. But nobody else can speak like him, and thus his apostles always constitute, or verge into, a lunatic fringe. Furthermore his views on sex were, as he himself kept repeating, often misunderstood. He was attacking Puritan repression which in his early days in England was still a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

considerable force, and he claimed that this often crippled the emotional lives of some men and women, which was true. But he was also a rather fierce Puritan himself, and on monogamy was as insistent as the Catholic Church. He did not think that the end of human life was a continuous and ecstatic copulation. In *A Propos of Lady Chatterley's Lover* he said that for some people perhaps it would be best if they just did not try to enter into a sexual relationship. But for anybody a satisfactory sexual relation was not an end but a beginning for a total reconstruction of society, for a different and, he thought, better relationship between man and man and man and the universe he inhabits. *Women In Love* ends not with the happy lovers, Birkin and Ursula, safely in bed for eternity, but leaves Birkin, happy as he is with his love, wondering, "Where do we go from here?" "What kind of society can I be a part of?" Furthermore, sex in Lawrence is not just a physical act; it is also a mystique with religious overtones. Finally, he had the real Archimedean sense: he could stand back and look at himself, and laugh; he was aware of the anomaly that the prophet of silence, of the blood, of un-selfconsciousness in sexual relations could do nothing but talk about it himself. On himself he told the story of the little Italian printer who set up so badly (he could not read English) the original publication of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. A newspaper pitied this poor little man for setting up the book in ignorance. The printer was momentarily taken aback, thinking he might have set up a political tract or something out of the way, but when told that the book contained such-and-such words and described certain things, he replied, relieved, "O! *ma*! but we do it every day!" So much for that.

Mr. Fiedler's book is all about sex, but not in any Lawrencian sense. So far as I can see, and I have read the book carefully, Mr. Fiedler's scale of values is fairly simple. There is virginity or frustration (this is bad) and there is something called "genital maturity" or "full genital happiness" (this is good). So far as I can see these are the only values posited, and, for reasons given above, they are not Lawrencian. This "genital maturity" is never evidenced in American literature and seldom, evidently, in American life. But there is a paradox, for this ambiguous situation produced a great literature, which is at the same time "duplic-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

itous." The author then is in the curious position of excoriating this Puritanism (I have news for him—it ended long ago) and its crippling effect on life and literature, and of celebrating the greatness of the ambiguous literature it produced. He wants his literature dark and diabolical, and thinks that frustrated sexual lives and a Puritanical society can produce this, while at the same time he is always deploring it all and is the champion of masculinity, "genitality," true womanhood, and so on. So while Mr. Fiedler admits to having "distorted" his masters, in my opinion he has done something worse: he has oversimplified them.

All of which brings me to my last point. I hope I may be pardoned if I speak with some heat. Mr. Fiedler is the foremost representative, and I think the liveliest and the best, of a school of "criticism" that has come into being in this country in the last few years. Properly it is neither criticism nor history nor sociology nor psychology but is rather a kind of amateur brand of sociology *cum* sex, or, rather, sex *cum* sociology. At a fairly respectable level it produces such a document as *Love and Death in the American Novel*; at a low level it produces those interminable symposia in magazines and books, wherein after reading a few current novels or poems or watching some television shows the "critic" gives a full-scale analysis of "the state of American culture." It has produced a critic whom I like to call the self-styled Archimedean American, the man who has discovered, he thinks, the Archimedean resting place of complete objectivity. He lives, I guess, on a space platform, and we shall certainly have to include one of these types on the first trip to the moon, for if one is not along to tell all the other Americans on the voyage what they have seen, then they won't *know* what they have seen, and everything will have been wasted, and we'll have to get all our information about the moon from the Russians. His mission in life is to act as if he were a European making notes on the natives. He has divided the population of America into two parts: himself (it's not even "we" anymore) and everybody else. His justice is untempered by mercy, and as far as I can see, no other American, except himself, is exempt from his wrathful generalizations; e.g., Mr. Fiedler: ". . . our literature (and life!) [are] so charmingly and infuriatingly 'boyish' "; "our critics" [no exceptions made]

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

maintain a "conspiracy of silence" about the "eccentricity" of American books, or, even more damning "(Or is it the critic's *unawareness* of the fact?)." Occasionally a grudging word of commendation is bestowed on some other worker in the vineyard. Mr. Grossman's book on Cooper is "insightful," but on the particular point for which Mr. Grossman was referred to, he was wrong, i.e., he didn't see things as Fiedler did. Significantly, the only other commentator referred to with real enthusiasm is Geoffrey Gorer, an English sociologist of dubious repute, who, in his wisdom, has X-rayed the American soul from the standpoint of *his* deserted eminence. Thus Mr. Gorer "aptly remarks"—then comes the usual balderdash about the "American conscience" being "feminine," whatever this means. Or, "as Geoffrey Gorer has made quite clear, mothers are also fathers, that is, embodiments of the super-ego. . . ." Well, he may have made it clear to Mr. Fiedler, but he has not made it clear to me. Clarity, too, is the happy possession of Marie Bonaparte, a French follower of Freud. She has X-rayed Poe properly: "(as Marie Bonaparte and other analytical writers have made clear)" Poe was pursuing his own mother in "his disguise as Pym."

Now at this point any reader conversant with the "brow" game that Mr. Fiedler and others of his persuasion play is going to breathe a sigh of relief and neatly dispose of the present writer by saying, "Aha, an upper-middle-brow, an America-Firster. Can't stand European criticisms. Anti-Freudian. Next thing he'll be quoting J. Donald Adams. I wish he were more prominent so Dwight MacDonald could eviscerate him (he probably likes Cozzens anyway)." I speak, however, for no "brow" level, but only for clarity, and intellectual responsibility and against the misuse of such complex affairs as the thought of Freud, or Marx, or D. H. Lawrence. I speak for something more; I speak for the rich, tangled complexity of literature, of history, of life itself where each moment is unique.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BOOKS

FICTION CHRONICLE

FREE FALL. By William Golding. Harcourt, Brace. $3.95.
A HERITAGE AND ITS HISTORY. By I. Compton-Burnett. Simon & Schuster, $3.75.
FROM THE HAND OF THE HUNTER. By John Braine. Houghton Mifflin, $3.75.
THE LONELINESS OF THE LONG-DISTANCE RUNNER. By Alan Sillitoe. Knopf, $3.50.
RITUAL IN THE DARK. By Colin Wilson. Houghton Mifflin, $4.95.
ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS. By Colin MacInnes. MacMillan Co., $3.75.

If the British ever ran an export drive in quality fiction they would find themselves depending heavily upon some of the writers in this list, and without Golding and Compton-Burnett they would have small chance of success. The others are not quite in that class, but Braine and Sillitoe represent the sophisticated provincialism which is a current selling point, and MacInnes is a perceptive reporter of actual English life, especially among the minors and immigrants. So there is a lot of British culture in this list, and I wish I could say I liked the look of it more than I do.

William Golding I take to be the most important English novelist since the 'twenties, an astonishingly dedicated and original artist driven on by a compassion which only in the matter of technical control becomes an almost cruel severity. *Free Fall* is his fourth novel, and I run counter to my own sense of what is probable or decent in calling it a failure. Golding always insists on the simplicity of his books, but it is a simplicity of a kind that makes for critical complexity, and nobody could hope to get much out of this novel at one reading. Yet, after three readings, I still cannot quite take it. In all that relates to the shape of the "myth"—as he likes to call it—Golding's skill is what it was. Technically, *Free Fall*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(using a system of time shifts devised to expose the religious significance of a man's whole experience) is as accomplished as any novel of Conrad's. It is a mark of Golding's integrity that in every book he invents technical devices of great ingenuity but entirely without self-indulgence; his skill is never a hair's breath in excess of what the moral occasion demands. One's coolness towards the book has other causes.

The myth of *Free Fall* is basically that of all Golding's novels: the Fall, the expulsion from paradise, erected wit and infected will. It is a myth which has accumulated an enormous theology; this doesn't matter until the novelist—or his hero in search of explanations—turns theologian also. Samuel Mountjoy examines his life with a view to discovering some pattern, some connection between his two worlds of experience, one deterministic, rational, the other horror and glory, heaven and hell. His conclusion (not the conclusion of the novel) is that "there is no bridge." It is in Sammy's speculations that one detects a hollowness, or what Coleridge called "mental bombast"—"thoughts and images too great for the subject," because the subject is not the Fall but a commentary on it. In the other books you *taste* isolation, guilt, innocence; here you don't. The prose is denatured, the narrative lacks plasticity. The crucial episode, a man alone in a cell, calls for, and is not provided with, the savage power of *Pincher Martin*. Yet it is, in its way, wonderfully composed, passionate and cunning. There is no question of a failure of power or nerve, only—to be bold—of a flaw in the original conception.

Free Fall, like *Paradise Lost,* is about *everything,* a tough assignment. The characters are named accordingly. Samuel Mountjoy at first misunderstands his vocation (like Samuel in the Bible) and as a child in a slum inhabits paradise (Mountjoy). As he writes, he lives on Paradise Hill, "thirty seconds from the shops." An important event in his life is the recognition of the beauty of a girl called Beatrice; but he makes the opposite choice to Dante's, and, by a positive act of will, rejects the possibility of living by this vision and subjects the girl to his lust. The two worlds between which he is suspended (in a condition of "free fall," as we know it in science fiction) are represented by a religious schoolmistress and a science master called Nick. At some point, the point he is in-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

quiring after, he loses freedom of will, is locked in the wrong world; but he finds the other after a Gestapo interrogation modeled on that of Christ in the desert. Is he a son of God? He peoples his cell with egotistical terrors, and at the height of his agony bursts out of the cell—or is let out of it, a crucial ambiguity—forgiven. He walks into the world of vision, hearing the music "of earth and sun and unseen stars." But Beatrice has been reduced (and this is as fine a passage as anything in Golding) to an incontinent in an asylum. Sammy cannot reconcile his worlds; the novel does so on the last page (Golding's first and last pages need to be read with fantastic care) but I'm sorry to say I don't understand the bridge it builds. At any rate there seems to be nothing Mr. Golding cannot try, and to write with this kind of resource about the fall into and the delivery from the body of this death is to require with a certain justified imperiousness the respect of all readers. That this is a book flawed by a certain dry brittleness in the writing as well as by the sheer size of the conception I think to be no less than the truth; but in its way it suggests very strongly that Golding's greatest work lies ahead, and if it can be called a failure it is only in the sense you might use when speaking of a known and revered master.

Miss Compton-Burnett, I hardly dare to say, is a little off form in her new book. I do not dote on her novels but it is possible to see her extraordinary distinction without doing so. She shares with very different writers—Salinger and Wodehouse, for instance—the knack of infecting one with a dialect; just before going to sleep one can, after reading one of her books, entertain oneself with endless conversations, automatically witty. Her books are what they are. But I owe it to myself to add that this is not infallibly what they ought to be. And debts of this nature are never left unpaid. In the last novel, *A Father and his Fate* (a better book than this, I think), one character explains why he has been whispering (uselessly, for in this world everything is overheard): "What is there about any of it fit to be uttered aloud?" This is true of all Miss Compton-Burnett's fiction. In her artificial hell nothing goes without saying provided it can be said in the infernal dialect. All speak it, servants and children included, because they breathe it in with the poisonous air. Every remark, false, sentimental, cruel or apparently generous even, breeds a malicious consequence by a sort of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hellish logic. This book happens to be concerned with old age, with a Lear who will not die. The malice of the opening is all one could ask, but when the plot gets going we see that in this house lust and greed can add undertones of anguish to the very dialect of malice. The old man who heads the family contracts a *mariage blanc,* but his younger brother and heir does himself out of the inheritance by getting the bride with child. In the next generation, with the old man still alive, the truth has to come out in order to prevent incest. As usual, some act of lust, incredible among such cerebral persons, sends the endless conversation off on its spiraling agonies. "Civilised life exacts its toll. We live among the civilised," says the ancient Sir Edwin. "The conventions are on the surface," his wife answers. "We know the natural life is underneath." The characters even see themselves as playing parts in a tragedy so primitive that it is absurd of them to be involved in it. Each insists that the brother or rival "is what he is," believing in the need for villainous selfishness as the sole protection against dispossession and death. The book says that the heritage and its history do not in the long run matter, but nevertheless "we are involved in things that do." These things are sin and death. In the bizarre theological simplicity of the Compton-Burnett world the civilized carry their primitive hells about with them.

The skill with which Miss Compton-Burnett handles her outrageous plot is wonderful; she is entirely mistress of her conventions. There is one paragraph of expository prose in the book. On the whole, though, this one has less bite, its hell is less amusing, than some of the earlier ones. At times the dialect seems to move closer than we like to Wodehouse, the conversation free-wheels. People compare her with Jane Austen, one can see why; but in the end this is as absurd as comparing Hobbes with Hooker. Yet she is not grossly flattered by the collocation of names. She is literally inimitable; she has cheated all the lawgivers of modern fiction; and it is quite impossible to imagine a future time in which a few people will not read her.

John Braine wrote *Room at the Top,* a successful book about success; *From the Hand of the Hunter* is an unsuccessful book about failure, which may illustrate a new fallacy of imitative quality. The new book is written with Braine's usual care, and the method is

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

much the same: a region of Yorkshire has to be given a sort of archetypal status, the price and quality of objects must be recorded because the inhabitants of the Braine country are obsessed by their own status. It is a device of Mr. Betjeman's for registering the modern suburban scene. A young man looks at his Ingersoll, someone drives up in a Rover 90 (O.K., but not for the very top). In Braine there are passages like this: "She took off her dressing-gown, powdered herself with French Fern talcum, and lay down on the narrow bed with the white iron frame. She took a Player's from the white deal bedside table. . . ." Why, one wonders is the dressing-gown colorless and without a maker's name? Together with this love of the brand name goes a nostalgic admiration for the well-made old Yorkshire things, but wanting good things, old and new, is the main driving force of Braine's characters. His hero in this second book finds the going hard; in childhood he had helped to invent a whole mythology of irrational monstrous enemies called the Vodi, whose motiveless malignity continues, in later life, to frustrate him. He falls in love with failure and it almost makes him die (the sanitarium scenes are very accurate). The desire to achieve one of the nurses sets him back on the road of life. There is no reason why this shouldn't do; but what made *Room at the Top* memorable was the reality and the normal violence of the love scenes; and the new book has nothing comparable. Braine is going to be at work on the Braine country for a long time; he thinks of himself as a Brontean mythmaker (and the Bronte country geographically overlaps his). He has the patience, certainly, to make a map; the question is whether the vitality of *Room at the Top* can be restored, the map brought to life.

Sillitoe's book is a collection of stories dominated by the title piece, which is very fine. The Sillitoe country is Nottingham back streets, and he is interested in rendering the tones of urban poverty more darkly, and more accurately, than has lately been the custom. The big story is a monologue by a boy at a reform school. His talent for cross-country running is encouraged by the Governor, who wants him to win a cup in a competition. The boy on his training run tells how he broke into shops and why, his morality a neat inversion of the respectable kind; and on the race day he just stops and avoids winning, in order to do the really honest thing

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and infuriate the pop-eyes pot-bellied governor. Mr. Sillitoe is loaded with talent, and the other stories are distinguished, accurate, and sometimes depressing.

Mr. Wilson's book is different from all the others not only in that it is twice as long as any of them, but because it is an obvious, though obviously unsuccessful, candidate for the epithet "major." It should please admirers of Mr. Wilson's non-fictional works, and also the possibly even larger group which might fancy a novel about a sadistic mass-murderer. A few years ago there was a Diaghilev exhibition in London, very pretty but with, I thought, too strong a smell. To this went Mr. Wilson's young writer-hero; and so did the modern Ripper, an upper-class figure called Austin Nunne. The hero likes him, even confounds him with Nijinsky, for whom he has a not altogether explicable reverence. Slowly he comes to see his friend as an interestingly complex case, and does a lot of thinking about him; but not so much that he can't have the sort of time young men dream about. Within a few days he collects two maidenheads, an aunt and a niece at that; frustrates a pyromaniac in the flat above; and befriends a sad painter who is jailed on a charge of molesting a little girl. Anything can happen in London. When he is taken to view the corpse of one of Austin's victims, Gerard (for that is his name) is not shocked into morality and a willingness to turn his friend in, as the authorities naively hope; instead he drags the cover off another dead woman; she was burnt to death, and this does make him think. He does not desire her, so death is absurd. We leave him in a delicious how-happy-could-I-be-with-either dilemma between aunt and niece.

The book is less ridiculous than this makes it sound, but I do not think I have been unfair; I refrain from discussion of the thinking that goes on throughout, which evens matters up. The jacket of this American edition gives a somewhat inaccurate account of the novel, nowhere more so than when it hints a comparison with Dostoevsky. Anxious though I am to cut a modern figure before the American public, I can find no answer to this except the mild and obsolete vernacular expostulation: "Chuck it, Houghton Mifflin Co.!"

Mr. MacInnes isn't young enough to be *that* kind of angry, but he is against a lot of damnable things and a good man to have

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

about in England at the present time. Having written a sensibly affectionate book about our Negroes, he now does the same for our teen-agers. The precision of this record of teen-age spending, sex and talk is not, I think, in question, and being himself a "pensioner" (over twenty-five) Mr. MacInnes *had* to love them to get to know them this well. On life in the Notting Hill tenements he speaks with authority ("Man, I tell you, you've only got to be there for a minute to know there's something radically *wrong*") and he does London proud, knowing it right through. The trouble is that his young narrator has acquired the author's sensibility, a sort of tenderness towards the young; and this persistently falsifies the story. Teen-age photographers (pornographic at that) may find the "coloureds" civilized, but they don't see or think like this: "Up out in Pimlico, the old, old city raised her bashed grey head again, like she was ashamed of her modern daughter down by the river, and I went up streets of dark purple and vomit green, all set at angles like ham sandwiches, until I reached the Buckingham Palace road. . . ." This was written by a middle-aged square, fastidious, sentimental, thoroughly nice. But his eyesight and hearing are unimpaired, his London is what it is, and when he brings the whole thing to the boil with the Notting Hill race riots of 1958 (borrowing the good summer of 1959 to help explain them), Mr. MacInnes gets across a lot of that outraged incredulity that was the best most of us could do in response to the beastliness. May he be right in the suggestion that the very young are in their way too civilized ever to repeat it. Mr. MacInnes likes things and he likes people. He may not be a distinguished artist, but we've already mentioned some of those, and, remembering the shortage of nice people, and also the imaginary export drive, this is a book nobody is likely to regret reading.

Frank Kermode

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

IN PRAISE OF FLORENCE

THE STONES OF FLORENCE. By Mary McCarthy. Photographs by Evelyn Hofer and others. Harcourt, Brace. $15.

" 'How can you stand it?' This is the first thing the transient visitor to Florence, in summer, wants to know. . . . Naples is a taste the contemporary traveler can understand, even if he does not share it . . . Rome . . . Siena. But Florence?" This is how Mary McCarthy begins her praise of Florence. She continues with a very realistic description of the noise, confusion and discomfort that modern Florence has in store for the visitor. The picture is true, but what the author is obviously aiming at is to establish from the beginning a safe distance between the Florence of contemporary mass tourism and the one she has herself discovered. An effect of Brechtian *Entfremdung,* an irony which will preserve the writer from falling prey to her own enthusiasm. Such "distancing" is consistently maintained all through the book.

Miss McCarthy would not want us to think that she is "discovering" Florence. She is just looking at it from the perspective of the present world. The Florence she describes is not some unknown, strange, whimsical aspect of the illustrious city. It is the Florence of the Quattrocento, Brunelleschi, Donatello, Poalo Uccelo. Michelangelo appears to her a kind of troublemaker, and mannerist painting just Florentine virtuosity gone crazy. She calls Michelangelo's Sacristy in San Lorenzo "a brilliant rodomantade," and speaks of "a brothel during a police raid" and of "circus tableau" apropos of Pontormo and Il Rosso. So much does she want to be left alone with the Quattrocento.

"White, black, gray, dun and bronze are the colors of Florence —the colors of stone and metal, the primitive elements of Nature out of which the first civilizations were hammered—the Stone Age, the Bronze Age, the Iron Age," says Miss McCarthy. "Dry, proud, terse, thrifty," are the adjectives she likes to apply to the Florentine. "Simplicity of life Florence shared with Athens, and the great Florentines of the Quattrocento, Donatello and Brunelleschi, lived like barefoot philosophers. . . . Socrates traced his descent from Daedalus, the cunning craftsman, whom Brunelleschi, too, might

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

have claimed a mythic ancestor. Brunelleschi's architecture, moreover, is a species of wisdom, like Socratic and Platonic philosophy, in which forms are realized in their absolute integrity and essence: the squareness of square, the slenderness of slender, the roundness of round. . . . Brunelleschi's dome compels a kind of slow, surprised recognition; it is the way a dome 'ought' to be, just as love, for a young person, is at once a surprise and the way he knew it should be, from books and hearsay."

Florence, too, one might remark, is to Mary McCarthy "at once a surprise and the way she knew it should be, from books and hearsay." This is what gives her book, marvelously illustrated as it is by Evelyn Hofer's photographs, its most captivating quality: youthful enthusiasm. To many a reader, of course, Michelangelo's Sacristy might seem the very opposite of "a brilliant rodomantade" —that is, an awesome image of human solitude, an indoor plastic space which has its perfect counterpart in that majestic public space, the piazza del Campidoglio in Rome, possibly the greatest monument of Renaissance Utopia. But one does not feel like arguing while reading this book. One just wants to listen to this intelligent woman commenting on her discoveries. She is not giving us art criticism, she is trying to make her acquaintance with Florentine art and her knowledge of Florentine history into a story. Her account of Paolo Uccello's fascination with perspective, her description of the Pazzi Chapel are attempts to evoke the characters and their background. Thus she relates the famous fifteenth-century tale of the trick played by Brunelleschi and his friends on the "fat woodworker" by convincing him that he was not himself but "a mere confused flux of consciousness that thinks it is a fat woodworker," and connects the story with the unsettling of the relation between appearance and reality induced by Florentine intellectualism. And this is what she achieves most completely in the outlining of the figure of Donna Maria Ciliego, a Florentine beggar of the seventeenth century: "Like Diogenes, this female philosopher, who came from the people, lived in the street, sleeping under a loggia or portico; she received charity without begging, because she spoke in marvellous apothegms and enunciated dogmas of her own. She was extremely clean; she carried a broom with her to sweep out her 'quarters' (i.e., the pavement she slept on). In her basket,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

she had a change of linen and a brush for her clothes; she toted a washtub about with her, for her laundry, and a little *caldanotte,* or stove, to do her cooking. Under her skirt, she kept saucepans and plates in sacks and whatever leftovers she had with her. When she wanted to change her clothes, she would go to the house she had once owned, where her sister and nephew lived, but she would never consent to sleep there. *Nihil nimis;* at the end of the week what she had left from the alms that had been given her she would distribute to poor nuns. This remarkable person evidently had reduced bodily life to its essentials without compromising her standards of propriety and decorum. She was a sage of the antique stamp, conducting her little affairs according to the tidy principles of reason, unlike the filthy anchorites of the Christian tradition. Even beauty received her due allowance; her clothes were full of patches, which were sewed on prettily, like ornaments."

One thinks of some such artistic image as Botticelli's *Derelitta,* stranded in reality; or more pathetically, of a symbol of Florence itself, in the period of her decadence. There, in any case, stated even more clearly than when she is speaking about art, we have what has made Florence so endearing to Miss McCarthy. It is all those features of Florentine civilization that are opposed to the modern world, the world of confusion, senseless prodigality, intellectual profligacy. As Brunelleschi and Uccello, with their clarity of mind and definiteness of purpose, represent the opposite of the contemporary artist, so the Florentine way of life, reduced to a kind of Dickensian absurdity in the image of Donna Maria Ciliego, is a sober comment on the world of "affluent economy" we are living in. In Florence, no doubt, Miss McCarthy found a happy escape from "the groves of Academe." She is too much of a modern intellectual to let herself be carried away by nostalgia for a past "golden age." What she sees expressed in the monuments of Florence is a certain number of human virtues which once had the chance to flower, and can never be recalled from the past. Yet they remain forever examples of possible achievements. Florence is to her a mirror into which we can see for a moment our own features straightened out, as it were. A Utopia that lasts as long as one stays there, and need last no longer.

Nicola Chiaromonte

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A SECOND NOVEL

SET THIS HOUSE ON FIRE. By William Styron. Random House. $5.95.

In 1951 William Styron published his first novel, *Lie Down in Darkness*. It made a durable mark; failing to stimulate the mind, it nevertheless haunted, as though the dark shadow of a large hand hovered over the heart, affecting one with a sense of calamity and doom (and gloom). Immature in some ways (the novelist was still in his twenties), the book insinuated, encircled, herded the attuned reader into an emotional experience that shattered tranquil days long after the last pages were a faint memory. It somehow hung on, in spite of ratiocinative dismissals. Power, the capacity to construct powerful equivalents in fiction of what was his idea of the world, was then Mr. Styron's striking gift, his most remarkable virtue.

Now nine years later Mr. Styron's second full length novel comes to us—but what a nine years it has been! What an unholy, inactive lot we were during that time. Bitter, cynical, indifferent, supine, momentous events proceeded without us, the world advanced in spite of us, life ebbed and flowed in vast movements while we loafed on beaches and in television rooms. How sad for most of us, who rode out our nation's unconnection, remaining unconnected, solitary, alien, complacent. Yet for a "happy few" this evil time was transformed into an auspicious time in which to mature. How can this come about? Some human law has to be operative: the complacent chorus breeding the anxious solo, the organization tentacles missing the corners where individuals were at work on their own idiosyncratic tasks; "And on a heath beneath winking stars a fox with merciless bright eyes scraped in the earth, listened, scraped up the earth, listened, scraped and scraped."

For me, who may be only a poor minority, *Set This House on Fire* is an immeasurable gain in maturity over the author's fine first novel, though I would not know how to calculate those nine years of growing up. Because of the rapidity and intensity of the upheavals in the world; because of their instantaneous relevance

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to each inhabitant of each continent; and, more important, because the evil of our own isolation and dislocation and inaction permitted the individual for the first time in this period (before there had been mass depression, collective politics and total war) to conduct an uninterrupted dialogue with himself, call it ninety years. To finish off the conceit, then, the new novel appears to me to be ninety years more mature (in the sense that one is supposed to be learning all the time), more knowing, more directed and controlled, than Mr. Styron's first book.

Not that the novel is a complete success. There are flaws, though perhaps it would be more accurate to call them mistakes of the will. The entire beginning is just such a mistake, opening with a monologue by the narrator of the story, which then turns into a dialogue between the narrator and the protagonist of the novel, a painter called Cass. Together they reconstruct the events that led to rape and murder in the Italian village of Sambuco, with its cliffs and sea, its villas and peasant hovels. The emphasis is false; the novel itself proves the significance of the narrator to be invalid. What he contributes to the fulfillment of the puzzle (the pattern, the design) is unnecessary. And because his function is artificial, willed as it were in terms of structure, he contributes a tone that is too high-pitched, recalling too easily the macabre tones of the Gothic-shudder school of story-telling. How the novel itself, as it slips into gear, rids itself of this superfluity, is one of its major delights, a triumph of art over craft, of the organic over the willful. To be fair to Mr. Styron, the events that succeed the opening pages are of moment and their intensity is unflagging, so that in retrospect one may justify the initial tone and conceivably find a correspondence between atmosphere and act, though I do not think so. The bulk and heart of the novel is so swift, so sure, so true that it needs no aggrandizements, no outside jacking-up, no preparatory bolstering. Two men talking, exploring, finding something out—it goes beyond story-telling, no matter how profound the story; it somehow seems less frivolous, less an idle act. I must halt at the frontiers of the psychology of art. No matter; mistake or no mistake, the novel grows, expands and literally runs, carrying its burden of beauty and corruption with singular ease.

With the exception of Malcolm Lowry's Mexico in *Under*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the Volcano, I know of no modern novel that unfolds and conveys a sense of place as this one. Not only a sense of it, but a physical knowledge of it, so that road, street, cliff, square, palazzo and hut are all around us, visible, smellable and tactile. The characters are astonishingly good, all of them, major and minor, mural and miniature; each comes to individual life, distinct and clear and unexaggerated. Mr. Styron's language, in the beginning a little self-conscious, patently sheds its Faulknerian heritage, grows into an efficient (though still formal) machine, exact and solid. His themes, multifarious and hidden, entwine and grow one into the other, so that issues and people are inseparable, and consequently "non-paraphrasable." The question of evil is uppermost, but just who is evil is not as obvious as appears; and the questions of guilt and sin and responsibility are also intrinsic to this book.

I have seen other reviews of *Set This House on Fire,* less affirmative or enthusiastic than this estimate. In the long run, critical judgments will not effect the significance and durability of the novel which, in spite of defects or weaknesses, I consider a first-rate work. Come to think of it, at its heart, it has a good deal of Lowry's *Under the Volcano.* The painter of Styron has much in common with the Consul of Lowry: the excess, the alcohol, the relationship to landscape, the illusory line between reality and dream, the delusions and visions and nightmares. Only the bitter hopelessness in Lowry, steadfast and eternal, is replaced by a bitter-sweet, possibly tougher, tentative hopefulness. I am not hinting at even an influence; I am suggesting a similar concern, a diving deep into place and people and discovering at the depth a world of tragedy and violence. At the heart of Mr. Styron's story I found myself being pulled into too deep water; in Lowry's story I drowned, as, of course, one drowns in Dostoevsky's novels. I mean only that one gives over completely. Mr. Styron, in his new novel, is close to that tyrannical power.

Harvey Breit

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

END OF AN EPOCH

THE END OF IDEOLOGY. By Daniel Bell. The Free Press. $7.50.

The central thesis of Mr. Bell's book is stated only at its very end:

> Today . . . ideologies are exhausted. The events behind this important sociological change are complex and varied. Such calamities as the Moscow Trials, the Nazi-Soviet pact, the concentration camps, the suppression of the Hungarian workers, form one chain; such social changes as the modification of capitalism, the rise of the Welfare State, another. In philosophy, one can trace the decline of simplistic, rationalistic beliefs and the emergence of new stoic-theological images of man, e.g. Freud, Tillich, Jaspers, etc. . . . Out of all this history, one simple fact emerges: for the radical intelligentsia, the old ideologies have lost their "truth" and their power to persuade. . . . In the Western world there is today a rough consensus among intellectuals on political issues: the acceptance of a Welfare State; the desirability of decentralized power; a system of mixed economy and of political pluralism.

By the time he gets to the explicit statement of this theme, Mr. Bell has already pursued it through more than three hundred pages of fascinating fact and argument. His book is obviously the product of a restless, inquiring, and informed mind—a mind characterized by alienation without sorrow, and detachment without isolation. The only trouble is that it is not always clear what Mr. Bell is after: his book reads like something half-finished, and while he has discussed a number of very important things along the way, his main thesis is far from proved when we reach the end.

In collecting into book form his essays on a wide variety of topics, an author faces a difficult choice: he can either reissue them without apology as a miscellany of thoughts, or he can rework them from start to finish to form a consecutive argument. Mr. Bell has chosen to do neither: he has tried to reach a compromise solution by revising his essays in part, by organizing them in a logical order, and by appending to them a new essay explaining what his purpose was all along. The difficulty in this solution is that some of the essays fit only lamely into the framework the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

author has devised for them. One or two of the very best—like "The Myth of Crime Waves"—have almost nothing to do with ideology. Others show overlaps, repetitions, and now and then an implied contradiction. Even within individual essays, the argument often does not flow easily; it stops or skips in erratic fashion; the lack of connectives between the essays and even between the individual paragraphs suggests their journalistic origin.

The result is an unevenness in style and in level of abstraction. The first and third parts of the book are analytic and historical, while much of the second consists of detailed and even chatty reportage. Part I, on the "ambiguities of theory" in American life, recapitulates a great deal of now familiar material on the curious and unforeseen way in which our society has developed in the past decade. Mr. Bell's reflections on "The Breakup of Family Capitalism," however, are fresh and pungent, and his essay on Keynes, Schumpeter, and Galbraith cuts through the difficulties of professional vocabulary to present an admirably neat summary of the present state of macro-economics.

With Part II we come to something gamier. Here most of the essays deal with one aspect or another of trade unionism, reflecting Mr. Bell's ten-year experience as labor editor of *Fortune*. They start with the most brilliant piece in the book—"Crime as an American Way of Life"—a tour de force of astute observation and quiet humor; Mr. Bell deserves general gratitude for his skillful dissection of the relationship between the social and political rise of Italian-Americans and certain commonly misunderstood aspects of the American underworld (such as the myth of a tightly organized "mafia"). Then after taking us on excursions to crime waves and "the racket-ridden longshoremen," the author leads up back to ideology with "The Capitalism of the Proletariat." This is the best brief analysis of American trade unionism I have ever encountered.

With the next essay, however, the tone changes sharply. "Work and Its Discontents" is the most perplexing piece in the book. On one level it is simply a very competent account of what automation and other contemporary innovations are doing to American industry and society. On a more abstract plane—as the title, with its echoes of Freud, suggests—the essay is a wide-ranging philosophical

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

speculation on what it means to a civilization to have drained its daily tasks of their meaning and joys. Here Mr. Bell the disengaged social observer enters into a subtle change of character; a new note of personal emotion creeps into his prose, surprising us—and doubtless himself also—with some old-fashioned ideological anger.

But the key to Mr. Bell's major theme comes only in Part III in a series of short essays on "The Mood of Three Generations." These are frankly autobiographical, and by telling us what happened to himself and to what he conceives to be his generation, he enables us to understand how he reached his present position. The three generations Mr. Bell distinguishes are successively: the "once-born," "the first political generation of the century"—Dewey, Beard, Holmes, Veblen, Brandeis—whose "essential optimism . . . was based upon an ultimate faith in the rationality or common sense of men"; the "twice-born," who went through the political wars of the 'thirties and 'forties and now find "wisdom in pessimism, evil, tragedy, and despair"; the "after-born"—too young for the great experiences of the century—who combine a "sober-matter-of-fact, 'mature' acceptance of the complexities of politics and existence" with "an underlying restlessness, a feeling of being cheated out of adventure, and a search for passion." It is of course the middle generation that interests Mr. Bell most. He thinks of it as a long generation ranging all the way from writers now over sixty like Edmund Wilson to people around forty like himself. The younger men, he finds, simply inherited almost unchanged from their elders "the key terms which dominate discourse today: irony, paradox, ambiguity, and complexity." For these elders themselves "led their own 'counter-revolt'" against the ideologies in which they had earlier believed—thus leaving the younger members of the same age group with no ideological task to perform.

All this is historically true, and Mr. Bell expresses it with clarity and sympathetic understanding. But it is not the whole truth. It is a parochial version of recent history betraying the myopia of the New York intellectual. Mr. Bell falls into the same sort of error that the French so often make when they assume that European intellectual life is restricted to the habitués of the Parisian literary cafés. The high value he puts on "sophistication,"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for example, reflects the values of a special and highly articulate group for whom the political virgin ranks as the most ridiculous (or dangerous) of mortals. And his linking of Freud with religious neo-orthodoxy suggests that he has succumbed to the faddish and conventional association of these two intellectual tendencies which distorts the whole psychoanalytic tradition. In writing only about the sort of intellectuals he knows—guilt-ridden for past errors and reading Freud in theological terms as though he were a cross between Jung and Niebuhr—Mr. Bell does a disservice to the American mind by treating one of its parts as though it were the whole.

A wider view of the past thirty years would include intellectual biographies which do not fit into Mr. Bell's mold—those of professors in the "provinces" who followed the ideological debates of the 1930's only from a distance, and who sometimes had a clearer view of the permanent significance of events for the very reason that they were not concerned with short-range tactical decisions; of men who spent long years in military or government service and whose ideological reflections necessarily matured at leisure since they could not be expressed in the public prints; of people who never became so disillusioned as those Mr. Bell writes about since they never were so *engagé*—who had committed themselves only in part to Marxism and hence had nothing to apologize for in later years; of intellectuals who saw no reason to give up their ideology because the one they had was sufficiently flexible and non-dogmatic to confront without flinching or becoming discouraged even the squalid realities of the 1950's. I think if Mr. Bell had broadened his view to include people of this sort, he would have found that the older members of his "twice-born" generation have not been quite so influential as he imagines. He would have seen that it is rather the "once-born"—the generation of Dewey and Brandeis—who despite all change of circumstance have remained the mentors of twentieth-century America.

To the truly young—to those still younger than Mr. Bell's "after-born"—the inheritance of these old masters remains very fresh. This youngest generation has made its appearance only in the past year: it has manifested its existence in the widespread campaign for lunch-counter integration, in the growing concern

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

over the threat of nuclear war, in modest starts on an effort to reinterpret the utopian strain in American thought. For the more imaginative and sensitive of men and women under thirty, ideology and utopia are far from dead. They have suddenly and rather surprisingly come to life after ten blank years of slumber. Thus Mr. Bell's book appears at just the wrong time. It has been published at the end rather than at the beginning of an unideological epoch. It is important, then, more for its *obiter dicta* than for its central theme—and more particularly for the passages in "Work and Its Discontents" in which the author almost by inadvertence opens the door to utopian thinking. One should, I suggest, read Mr. Bell in the reverse fashion from what he intended. But that is simply one of the perils of publishing a volume of collected essays.

H. Stuart Hughes

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

VARIETY

AT SEA WITH THE BEATS

My first contact with a Brahma of the Beat Generation was on the *Ile de France,* where I met Gregory Corso. Like myself, Corso was on his way home after an extended visit in Europe, with the one difference that his passage had been paid from funds raised by a "Let's bring Gregory back" campaign in New York. I was up on all the literature by this time, and viewed the movement with a strained mixture of curiosity and contempt, the latter an inheritance from my university upbringing, and the former spurred by a travel-bred conviction that the academic career skirts the mainstream of life.

Partly because of this marginality in outlook, and partly, I suppose, because I was willing to tender him the kind and degree of attention he craved, Corso and I hit it off from the start. I developed a fondness for the little man, who managed at times to look like a fairy-tale gnome — the good kind, who speaks in cryptograms and performs all the impossible tasks at night for the sleeping shoemaker —and at others seemed the incarnation of impish evil, of that triumphant maleficence which animates the winged gargoyle at Notre Dame, or the dandified dwarfs in Velazquez' portraits of Charles II's court. (Corso's unique appearance, of course, was made legendary by *Time* when, in answer to his boast before a Chicago salon that he had never in his life combed his hair, *Time* noted there was not a single voice raised in challenge.)

Of several memorable episodes in that voyage, the one I expect to carry with me longest was seeing Corso turn the tables on a sententious but well-meaning French doctor who, having observed Corso's behavior for some time, was trying to persuade him to visit a psychiatrist. While the Frenchman scribbled a therapist's name on a piece of paper, and noted the most conspicuous symptoms, Corso began to unfasten his trouser belt.

"Look — I don't need a psychiatrist. Why should I? I've got nothing to hide."

"I understand perfectly," the Frenchman went on taking notes.

"Look man, you're sending me to a psychiatrist—Why? I'm not sick—"

The doctor nodded. "Perfectly true. I'm only taking down a few notes."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Corso turned a pleading look on an elderly couple sitting at the adjoining table. "Hey look —he's writing down I'm sick. He wants to send me to a head-shrinker. Tell him—tell him he's the creep. I've got nothing to hide. . . ."

"Marked seemtomes of persecu-shone," the doctor murmured under his breath, and wrote it down.

Corso moaned pitiably. "He's a creep—a creep. Listen to him. He wrote down I'm persecuted. . . ." The old couple rose in alarm and left the table.

"Look man, listen—I'll show you who's the creep, all right? I'll pull my pants down right now—I'll show you I'm not hiding. . . . Will you join me?"

The doctor stared probingly at Corso's face. "Een-fantile exhibee-shoneesm," he hummed, and scribbled away.

Corso howled in genuine anguish. "Hey!" he called to a group of bystanders, in his shrill, pubescent voice. "He says I'm infantile—he's sending me to a head-shrinker. . . . Why man, I'm not infantile. Why are you crucifying me?"

"'I am not crucifying you. You are an unbalanced young man with emotional difficulties. I am merely trying to help—"

"You are. You're crucifying me because you're scared. Look, I'm not inhibited. You're the one that's shut up inside and dying inside. Behind that doctor's face and doctor's suit you're dying. Your soul is dying. . . ."

The Frenchman gazed at him, amused.

". . . You're the one that's evil," Corso shouted. "You kill life with your scalpel and antiseptic mind. You kill everything that's living, and sensitive, and you try to crucify me because I can still feel!" Corso's strident voice had finally attracted a crowd of spectators. A Frenchman in a trench coat sat down beside the doctor.

"Young man," the doctor said softly, "you are deluding yourself."

"I'm not deluding myself. Man, you're deluding yourself. Your whole life is deluded. An office on the *Champs Elysées*, a new *Citröen* every winter and summers in the Riviera. I'll bet you lie on your back all day and look up little girls' Bikinis."

The Frenchman in the trench coat, convinced apparently that his compatriot was getting the worst of it in an argument with an American hoodlum, whispered some words of encouragement in his ear. The doctor wheeled around and the two began a heated discussion, with many flourishes and gestures.

"You're evil, man," Corso went on, playing it now for the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

audience, "behind that Jekyll mask you're a Hyde—Monsieur Hyde. You're afraid to reveal yourself, but you can't hide. Look! He's afraid to show his face!" Corso reached for the doctor's pants.

"I insist you control yourself," the doctor hissed, and resumed the discussion with his colleague.

"Moloch — that's who you are!" Corso was shouting at the top of his voice. "Wine-sipping Mesmer! . . . Vitamin Karloff! . . . Camembert Caligari! You dissect people so you can hold their souls in your rubber-gloved hands and crush them, just like you want to crush me because I can still feel! . . . Moloch! Rimbaud-killer! Status-seeking Faustus!" Corso poked the doctor in the shoulder. "Look, doctor, we'll see who's hiding, all right?" He yanked at his own trousers and was stopped at the last moment by the doctor. Several women shrieked.

"This is vulgar — stupid, childish vulgarity!" The doctor's face had paled, and his voice quaked with anger.

"See?" Corso addressed the crowd. "He's the one that's afraid. He's hiding. I'll bet he's the one that always made sissie in his pants in the first grade. How you say in French, pee-pee?" The remark went un-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

heeded. The doctor was taken up with the other Frenchman, who began telling how he would handle Corso in his place.

Corso poked him once more. "Do you like Baudelaire?"

"I detest Baudelaire."

"He detests Baudelaire!" He threw up his arms in glee. "I'll bet you don't even like Shelley, or Rimbaud, or The Little Prince. . . ."

"Look," the doctor said, visibly exasperated by the two-front assault, "you need psychiatric help immediately, and I'm trying to recommend a good doctor — a friend of mine in New York—"

"Are you married?"

"Yes, I am married. What has that to do with anything?"

"When is the last time you held your wife's hand? When is the last time you kissed her?"

"What nonsense is this—?"

"Doctor, when is the last time you slept with your wife?"

The doctor stiffened, taking a most un-Frenchlike offense; he rose from the table and marched away, tearing his notes to shreds—"*Merde alors! C'est un cretin, lui! Plus qu'il est fou, psychopatique, plus imbecile—Idiot meme*! ! !" The Frenchman in the trench coat followed him out, flailing his arms wildly . . . "*Qu'est qu'il a dit? Qu'est-ce qu'il a dit?*"

For an hour or so afterward, Corso went from table to table, a small wounded boy in search of adult solace . . . "He wanted to send me to a head-shrinker . . . He says I'm infantile. . . ." There was an absurd, martyred wretchedness in his voice. By suppertime he had forgotten the incident entirely, and won a small sum of money playing stud poker with a trio of Harvard Law students.

Corso invited me to his cabin one afternoon, and showed me, among his other treasures, a thick stack of letters from Ginsberg, Kerouac, Burroughs. He picked some at random and read them aloud: each of them, by a seeming coincidence, contained encomiums on his poetry, especially a late piece of eschatological verse—"BOMB." "My father says it's got more vivid imagery than my own stuff," wrote Ginsberg. "I'm trying to line it up for an Evergreen Anthology," pledged Kerouac. ". . . Apostate . . . Apotheotic . . . Apocalyptic," clarioned Burroughs. I thought the poem good, with a vigorous talent for Homer-scaled metaphor—"The top of the Empire State arrowed in a broccoli field in Sicily" — and a willingness to take the bull by the horns in writing of our times which distinguishes it from much of our polished academic pastiche.

Corso also revealed—whether tongue-in-cheek or not, I'll never know, nor does it really

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

matter—how the million-dollar phrase "Beat Generation" was coined. In his version, it all happened in the proverbial garret across the street from Columbia; Kerouac and Ginsberg were there, with the Grand Wizard himself, Bill Burroughs, officiating. It was Burroughs who conjured the magic rune from the bubbling cauldron, and gave the world one of the most compelling, and lucrative, catchphrases minted west of Madison Avenue.

The best stunt Corso pulled off on board ship, besides making a lot of money at poker and humiliating a scion of the *haute bourgeoisie,* was a Truth Game he organized in the second-class cabin of an acquaintance of his. Corso had climbed on the top bed of a split-level bunk, and made us all sit in a tight circle on the floor. Most of us were college students, but there were a few white collars and professionals, and at least one budding executive. Seated on my right was a Wellesley girl in striped bermudas who confided proudly that she was the friend of another Wellesley girl whose roommate had been bilked of a hundred dollars by Corso. She called him things like "Angel" and "Buddha," and was thrilled beyond utterance whenever he stretched his spindly arm under the dinner table and wailed "Reach me

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

. . . reach meee" with the look of a mendicant spider-monkey.

"There'll be no cheating in this game," Corso shouted from his altar. "This is gotta be played straight." He sat cross-legged and bounced ever so lightly on the sagging mattress. A blond file-clerk on my left shook her head in befuddlement. "Is this guy for real?" she whispered.

"He's a saint," the Wellesley girl said, and canonized him with a nod of her head. "Ginsberg said so. I read it in one of his Introductions."

There was a hush in the cabin as Corso pulled a bottle of Bourbon from his back pocket and passed it around. The rules of the game were simple: someone took a swig of Bourbon, which then entitled him to ask the most candid possible question of any person in the room. When the question was answered, that person in turn took his swig and shot the question at someone else.

The object of the game, Corso claimed, was to strip off our inhibitions so we would "feel" for one another's hidden shames and deformities and learn to accept and love one another in our collective nudity. The final outcome, alas, was quite the opposite. At the end of an hour and two pints of Bourbon the cabin was a shambles of demolished egos. Reputations lay scattered on the floor like remnants of a busted *piñata* — all crepe-paper fragments, soiled candy, and broken bits of clay.

"How many men have you slept with?" a pony-tailed Vassar girl was asked by the file-clerk. Her wholesome good looks appeared to fade before the assembly as she confessed, haltingly, the first adolescent gropings with the doctor's son; the lonely nights in the Vineyard with the caretaker's son; the disastrous adventure with the butler's son . . . By the time she was through, her Minerva-like glow had fled entirely, to return, no doubt, the moment she stepped off the ship.

A Dartmouth peacock who had styled himself the cruise's Casanova was asked point blank to enumerate his conquests.

"Four," he replied with a brisk grin, thinking to slip away without the particulars.

"*Which* four?" Corso inquired, in the quiet, merciless voice of the Grand Inquisitor. The peacock's proud, erect feathers appeared to quiver and grey visibly around the edges as he committed one miscall after another. None of the young women present, it developed, recalled h a v i n g been "conquered."

A spinster secretary who had passed herself off as a youthful *ingenue* was asked to confess her real age, after which she sat huddled in a corner, weeping

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

copious, desolate tears we all knew now to be crocodile. And a married couple, the young executive and his wife, glared poison darts at one another after having betrayed a marked reversal of the expected ratio of premarital experience between male and female. The Wellesley girl, poor thing, was the most wilted one of all, having bared her soul to the company and found nothing in it worth baring.

Corso's diabolic design now became apparent. He had covertly engineered the entire show, and gotten precisely the results he wanted. From his elevated perch he surveyed the limp and naked puppets with an exultant, evil-genius grin.

My last recollection of the voyage, and Corso, was of the morning we sailed into New York Harbor. It was dawn of a cloudless December day; the skyline was etched in grey, a soft, enveloping grey with a glimmer of pink around the edges. It was a benevolent grey, an anaesthetic grey which smoothed over all sharp angles and erased the sting from the skyscraper spires. One felt the bold exhilaration of a thief about to plunder the treasured cove while the fierce dragon slept. Then I heard the whining lament from the stern of the ship.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A lone figure, stringy mop of hair blowing in the wind, sat straddled on the rail, his eyes fixed on the skyline, his arms hugging his waist. The collar of his pea-green army sweater was drawn tightly around the chin, like a cuirass. When the mouth gaped, one could almost discern a thin spout of water from protuberant gargoyle lips . . . "It's gonna crush me," it cried. "It's gonna crush meeeee. . . ."

Victor Perera

Dear Mr. Rahv:

Of course. Poor doctor; I forgot about all that. Eavesdroppers everywhere. Quite accurate.

Now, I insist you use my real name, Gregory Corso, and my real poem, BOMB; let's have no eggshell fiction between my yolk and yr public — no cellophane masks, sir. I suggest you check up on that doctor's French, the plusses seem rather minus to me. Yrs as you will have me,

Gregory Corso

Something like this should be published after a man is dead, but I guess there's just not enough time. Go ahead and print it, and I appreciate your asking me if it's all right.

CLASSIFIED

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS are accepted for personal and literary services, publishing offers, jobs wanted or available, houses and apartments wanted or available, tutoring, exhibitions, hard to find books, out of print periodicals, and miscellaneous items of a nature appealing to Partisan Review readers. Rate: 25c a word; 12 words, minimum. Discounted rates for several insertions available upon request. Deadlines: March 1, June 1, September 1 and December 1 for Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter issues respectively. Payment must be made upon placement of advertisement.

Smith graduate 1960 seeks permanent position, Paris. French, German, typing, shorthand. Leave September. Box 101, Partisan Review, 22 E. 17th St., New York 3, N. Y.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

TO OUR READERS

We are pleased to announce that with the January issue, Partisan Review will be published as a bi-monthly. More frequent appearance of the magazine, we feel, would have certain advantages in timeliness and variety over quarterly publication.

Our readers will also be glad to know that the recent change in format, which was made so that Partisan Review could be easily distributed along with the quality paperbacks, has been very successful. With the last issue, we reached our largest circulation since the magazine was started.

We thank our readers for helping us undertake bi-monthly publication, an important step in the future of Partisan Review.

New subscription rates, effective with the next issue, are:

$5.50 for one year (a saving of 50¢)

Add 75¢ a year for Canadian and foreign postage

$9.00 for two years (a saving of $2.00)

Present subscribers will receive the total number of copies to which they are entitled under the terms of their current subscription. We suggest that you renew your subscription immediately upon expiration to insure your receiving each issue of P.R.

THE EDITORS

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PARTISAN REVIEW

EDITORS:
William Phillips, Philip Rahv

ASSISTANT EDITOR:
Steven Marcus

EDITORIAL ASSOCIATE FOR POETRY:
John Hollander

EDITORIAL ASSISTANTS:
Hettie Jones
Jane Richmond

ADVERTISING MANAGER:
Susan Nirenberg

ADVISORY COMMITTEE:
Allan D. Dowling, Jason Epstein, H. William Fitelson,
Sidney Hook, Roger W. Straus, Jr.,
James Johnson Sweeney, Lionel Trilling

PARTISAN REVIEW is published quarterly by the American Committee for Cultural Freedom, Inc. at 22 East 17th Street, New York 3, N. Y. Subscriptions: $4 a year, $6.50 for two years, foreign subscriptions, including Canada, $4.50 a year, $7.50 for two years. All payments from foreign countries must be made by U.S. money orders or checks payable in U.S. currency or with $0.75 added for collection charges. Single copy: $1.00. Manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes. Copyright 1960, by PARTISAN REVIEW. Second class postage paid at New York, N. Y.

Distributed by Random House.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED